



United States  
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Agriculture

Forest  
Service

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# **Final Environmental Impact Statement**

## **For the Revised Land Management Plan**

### **Kootenai National Forest**



Art: by Frank Kujawa

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**Land Management Plan  
Final Environmental Impact Statement  
Lincoln, Sanders, and Flathead Counties in Montana  
Boundary and Bonner Counties in Idaho**

**Lead Agency:**

**USDA Forest Service**

**Responsible Official:**

**Faye Krueger  
Regional Forester, Northern Region  
200 E. Broadway  
Missoula, MT 59807**

**For Information Contact:**

**Paul Bradford  
Kootenai National Forest  
31374 US Highway 2  
Libby, MT 59923  
406-293-6211**

**Abstract:** This final environmental impact statement (FEIS) documents analysis of four alternatives developed for programmatic management of the 2.2 million acres administered by the Kootenai National Forest. The Forest Service has identified Alternative B Modified as the preferred alternative.





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## Acronyms

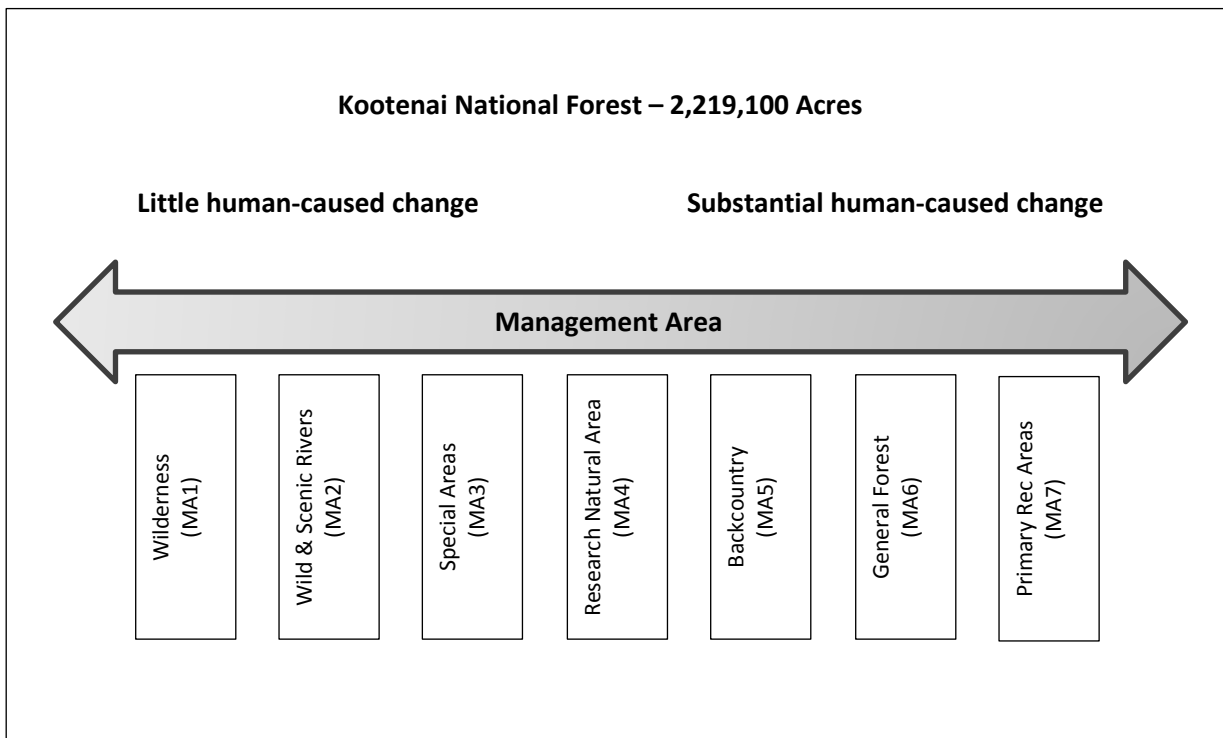
<b>AMS</b>	Analysis of the Management Situation	<b>MCF</b>	Thousand Cubic Feet
<b>ASQ</b>	Allowable Sale Quantity	<b>MIS</b>	Management Indicator Species
<b>ATV</b>	All-Terrain Vehicle	<b>MMBF</b>	Million Board Feet
<b>AUMs</b>	Animal Unit Months	<b>MMCF</b>	Million Cubic Feet
<b>BLM</b>	Bureau of Land Management	<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>BMUs</b>	Bear Management Units	<b>MT DEQ</b>	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
<b>BMPs</b>	Best Management Practices	<b>MVUMs</b>	Motor Vehicle Use Maps
<b>CER</b>	Comprehensive Evaluation Report	<b>NAAQS</b>	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
<b>CFR</b>	Code of Federal Regulations	<b>NEPA</b>	National Environmental Policy Act
<b>CYRZ</b>	Cabinet Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone	<b>NFMA</b>	National Forest Management Act
<b>EIS</b>	Environmental Impact Statement	<b>NHPA</b>	National Historic Preservation Act
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Agency	<b>NFS</b>	National Forest System
<b>ESA</b>	Endangered Species Act	<b>NOI</b>	Notice of Intent
<b>FIA</b>	Forest Inventory and Analysis	<b>NRLMD</b>	Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction
<b>FSEIS</b>	Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement	<b>PCE</b>	Primary Constituent Element
<b>GA</b>	Geographic Area	<b>RHCAs</b>	Riparian Habitat Conservation Area
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System	<b>RNAs</b>	Research Natural Areas
<b>HRV</b>	Historic Range of Variability	<b>ROD</b>	Record of Decision
<b>ICBEMP</b>	Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project	<b>ROS</b>	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
<b>IDT</b>	Interdisciplinary Team	<b>SRZ</b>	Selkirk Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone
<b>INFISH</b>	Inland Native Fish Strategy	<b>USC</b>	United States Code
<b>IPNF</b>	Idaho Panhandle National Forest	<b>USDA</b>	United States Department of Agriculture
<b>IRAs</b>	Inventoried Roadless Areas	<b>USDI</b>	United States Department of Interior
<b>KIPZ</b>	Kootenai Idaho Panhandle Zone	<b>USFS</b>	United States Forest Service
<b>KNF</b>	Kootenai National Forest	<b>USFWS</b>	US Fish & Wildlife Service
<b>LMP</b>	Land Management Plan	<b>WSA</b>	Wilderness Study Area
<b>LTSYC</b>	Long-term Sustained Yield Capacity	<b>WUI</b>	Wildland Urban Interface
<b>MA</b>	Management Area		



# Summary

## Proposed Action

The Kootenai National Forest (KNF) proposes to revise its Land and Resource Management Plan. The area affected by the proposal includes about 2.2 million acres of public land. The final Forest Plan would designate seven management area (MA) themes across the Forest: Wilderness (Designated, Recommended, and Wilderness Study Area); Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers; Special Areas (botanical, geological, historical, recreational, scenic, or zoological); Research Natural Areas (RNAs) (established and recommended); Backcountry; General Forest; and Primary Recreation Areas. The proposed MAs span a continuum (figure 1) that includes, at one end, an approach emphasizing passive management and natural restoration with little human-caused change, and on the other end, more active management with substantially more human-caused change designed to sustain the social, economic, and ecological attributes of the Forest.



**Figure 1. Management Area Continuum on the KNF**

Allocation to a specific MA does not mandate or direct the Forest Service to propose or implement any action; rather, the MAs provide direction on desired conditions and allowable activities and uses, as described in the Forest Plan, regarding:

- Timber harvest/timber production;
- Commercial and personal use of special forest products and firewood;
- Fire (prescribed and natural, unplanned);
- Livestock grazing;
- Motor vehicle use;

- Over-snow vehicle use;
- Mechanized use;
- Road construction and reconstruction; and
- Minerals (leasable and minerals material).

## Purpose and Need

The purpose of the action is to revise the 1987 Forest Plan for the KNF. The final Forest Plan would guide natural resource management activities on the Forest, and address changed conditions and direction that have occurred since the original Plan (1987), while meeting the objectives of federal law, regulation, and policy. Specifically, the final Forest Plan would provide management direction for identified revision topics forestwide, as well as MA direction.

In late 2000, the forest supervisor determined that revision was needed because significant changes had occurred in conditions and demands. The need for revision or change is based on legal requirements, changed conditions, and the Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) (2003). Revision is also warranted because the Plan is beyond the 10 to 15 year duration provided by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) (16 U.S.C. 1606(e) (5) (A)).

## Public Involvement

In late 2000, the KNF began working on revision of the Forest Plan under the 2000 Planning Rule. In April 2002, the Forest published a notice of intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register* announcing the revision of the Land Management Plan (LMP) with a 12-month public comment period.

From April 2002 to May 2004, the KNF hosted public meetings, open houses, field trips, and workgroup meetings. Approximately 15 informational and comment meetings took place in and around the local communities during the scoping process, which started in April 2002, with the NOI in the *Federal Register* and ended in May 2004. In addition to the public meetings; briefings and meetings were held with the Tribes, Congressional representatives, other elected officials, other agencies, and interest groups.

In addition, the KNF hosted approximately 75 workgroup meetings from August 2003 to September 2005. These meetings were held in the communities within the KNF and the workgroups focused on the geographic areas (GAs) surrounding each of these communities. The purpose of these workgroup meetings was to: 1) share information about the revision topics; 2) collaboratively discuss and develop desired conditions for each of the revision topics within the workgroup's GAs; 3) gain an understanding of the issues and appreciation of others' viewpoints; and 4) discuss Starting Option maps and potential changes to suggest to the forest supervisor.

On May 12, 2006, the Forest released the Proposed Land Management Plan under the 2005 Planning Rule. Open houses and public meetings were held to share the Proposed Land Management Plan, Comprehensive Evaluation Report, and other documents for the 120-day public comment period. Public comments on the proposed Plan were analyzed and summarized in a report (the Analysis of Public Comment Report, March 2007). Based on public and agency comments, the revision team began development of the final Plan. A court injunction (March 30, 2007) resulted in suspension of Forest Plan revision activities under the 2005 Planning Rule. The 2008 Planning Rule was released in April of 2008 and Forest Plan revision resumed under that Rule. A final Plan release was anticipated for winter of 2009 when a court ruling invalidated the 2008 Planning Rule in June 2009. The 2000 Planning Rule was reinstated in December of 2009. The 2000 Planning Rule was amended in 2002 to allow the Forest Service to follow the procedures of the 1982 Planning Rule. The Forest issued a second NOI in March



2010 to revise the Forest Plan using the 1982 procedures under the 2000 Planning Rule. All the public comment received on the various Forest Plan revision products over the life of the Plan revision were used in developing the draft Forest Plan and draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).

The draft Forest Plan and DEIS were released for public comment in January of 2012. Open houses were held in the communities throughout the Forest in January and February to share information regarding the documents and the process for commenting. The initial 90-day comment period for the draft EIS was extended an additional 30 days through May 7 of 2012. Numerous meetings were held with interested publics and elected officials during the 120 day comment period. Comments received during this 120-day comment period have been responded to in appendix G of the final EIS.

## Major Issues

The major issues are the seven primary revision topics addressed by the revised Forest Plan. These topics represent areas where there are unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

- Vegetation
- Fire
- Watershed and Aquatic Species
- Terrestrial Wildlife
- Access and Recreation
- Recommended Wilderness
- Timber Production

## Alternatives

These major issues led the agency to develop four alternatives:

**Alternative A** is the no-action alternative. This alternative is the 1987 Forest Plan, as amended to date, and accounts for current laws and regulations. New information, inventories, and technologies were used to evaluate this alternative. Output levels were recalculated for this alternative based on these new sources of information and amended direction. The no-action alternative retains the 1987 Forest Plan goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and MA prescriptions, as amended. This alternative serves as the baseline for comparison with the action alternatives.

**Alternative B Modified** is based on Alternative B from the DEIS, with modifications in response to comments. This alternative is the revised Forest Plan. It is the result of collaborative efforts since 2003 and responds to the identified purpose and need. This alternative emphasizes moving towards desired future conditions and contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Alternative B Modified would manage approximately 5 percent of the Forest as recommended wilderness (MA1b), 22 percent as backcountry (MA5), and 63 percent as general forest (MA6). Thirty-six percent of the Forest would be suitable for timber production.

**Alternative C** emphasizes wilderness values and protection of backcountry while moving towards desired conditions. There is an increased emphasis on natural disturbance processes (such as unplanned wildfire ignitions for multiple objectives) and prescribed burning. Mechanical treatments (e.g., timber harvest, stream improvements) also occur in order to move towards watershed and vegetation desired conditions. Alternative C would have more opportunities for backcountry and non-motorized recreation (MA1 – 342,600 acres; MA5 – 477,900 acres). This alternative also has more acres recommended as

wilderness (214,800 acres) than any other alternative. About 59 percent would be allocated to general forest (MA6). Thirty-four percent of the Forest would be suitable for timber production.

**Alternative D** emphasizes achieving desired condition through mechanical means. Timber production is emphasized while moving towards vegetation desired conditions. This alternative has the most acres available for timber production and motorized access with 75 percent allocated to MA6 (general forest). There would be fewer acres allocated to recommended wilderness (36,100 acres or about 2 percent) and backcountry (MA5 – less than 13 percent of the Forest). Thirty-eight percent of the Forest would be suitable for timber production.

All alternatives in this document adhere to multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services (Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 36 CFR 219.1(a), (b)). In addition, they share objectives and standards for managing forest resources and complying with applicable laws and policies. They also contain the same direction to contribute to the diversity of desired native and non-native plant and animal communities and contribute toward the recovery of threatened and endangered species. Forestwide direction identified in the Forest Plan would apply to all action alternatives. The difference between alternatives is primarily the difference in allocation of acres by MA to meet the purpose and need for change, and address one or more of the major issues.

Each alternative was developed to be in compliance with applicable law and regulation, as well as national policy and direction including, but not limited to, the Healthy Forests Initiative, National Fire Plan, and National Energy Policy. Each alternative retains the following existing decisions to the 1987 Forest Plan and the associated Biological Opinion:

- Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) (Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (1995));
- Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (Record of Decision (ROD)) (USDA Forest Service 2007 March); and
- Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (USDA Forest Service 2011 November (FSEIS and ROD)).

The following would not change between alternatives:

- **Draft Forest Plan Goals, Desired Conditions, and Standards and Guidelines** – Management area and forestwide direction for goals, desired conditions, standards, and guidelines remains constant for all action alternatives.
- **Developed Recreation Sites** – Existing developed recreation sites are retained in all alternatives. Alternatives do not make decisions to remove or to create developed recreation sites. Allocation of primary recreation areas (MA7) remains constant for all action alternatives.
- **Utility Rights-of-Way and Communication Sites** – Direction for and location of designated utility rights-of-way and communication sites remains constant for all alternatives.
- **Wilderness Study Area** – The Wilderness Study Area on the Forest was established by an Act of Congress in 1977. The Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area and its management would continue as outlined by the Wilderness Study Act, regardless of which alternative is selected for implementation.
- **Designated Wilderness** – The Cabinet Mountain Wilderness Designation remains constant for all alternatives.

## Comparison of Alternatives

Chapter 3 of this FEIS presents a detailed description of the effects of the alternatives. The following tables provide a summary of management area allocations by alternative (table 1) and effects by revision topic (table 2).

**Table 1. Comparison Percent MA Allocation by Alternatives**

MA	Alternative A <sup>1</sup>	Alternative B Modified	Alternative C	Alternative D
MA1a – Designated Wilderness	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%
MA1b – Recommended Wilderness <sup>4</sup>	3.4%	4.6%	9.7%	1.6%
MA1c – Wilderness Study Area	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
MA2 – Eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers	n/a	1.7%	2.0%	2.3%
MA3 – Special Areas	0.1% <sup>2</sup>	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%
MA4 – Research Natural Areas		0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
MA5a – Backcountry (Non-motorized Year-round)	15.5%	10.4%	15.2%	5.1%
MA5b – Backcountry (Motorized Year-round (Summer only on designated routes/areas))	<sup>3</sup>	7.7%	5.5%	2.2%
MA5c – Backcountry (Motorized Winter, Non-motorized Summer)	n/a	3.9%	0.9%	5.3%
MA6 – General Forest	n/a	63.5%	58.7%	75.5%
MA7 – Primary Recreation Area	n/a	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%

<sup>1</sup> Alternative A, the no-action alternative, is included even though it does not use the management areas shown in the revised Forest Plan. See table 4 in chapter 2 for a crosswalk of the 1987 Plan management areas to those used in the revised Plan and the action alternatives

<sup>2</sup> For Alternative A, MA3 and 4 are a combined total, from MA21 in 1987 Plan

<sup>3</sup> For Alternative A, MA5a and 5b are a combined total from MAs 2, 3, and 29 in the 1987 Plan

<sup>4</sup> Does not include overlapped MAs, but only where MA1b is primary (see mapping hierarchy as described in chapter 3 of the revised Forest Plan)

**Table 2. Comparison of Some Key Indicators for Revision Topics by Alternative**

Revision Topic (some Key Indicators)	Alternative			
	A	B Modified	C	D
<b>Vegetation</b>				
Forest composition, structure, and pattern	Least improvement towards DFC <sup>1</sup>	Greatest improvement towards DFC <sup>1</sup>	Second greatest improvement towards DFC <sup>1</sup>	Third greatest improvement towards DFC <sup>1</sup>
Carbon Sequestration	Greatest amount of carbon sequestered	Third highest amount of carbon sequestered	Second highest amount of carbon sequestered	Least amount of carbon sequestered
<b>Fire</b>				
Use of fire (prescribed and wildfire)	Lowest emphasis	Second most emphasis	Most emphasis	Third most emphasis
Fuel treatment/risk reduction	Lowest emphasis	Most emphasis	Third most emphasis	Second most emphasis
<b>Watersheds, Soils, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat/Species</b>				
Trend in watershed condition, water quality, soil productivity, riparian ecosystem function, and quality of aquatic habitats	Overall improvements, based on current and historical accomplishments in restoration efforts and activities	More rapid improvement than C or D. Vegetation restoration emphasis, would likely target areas that include other active restoration opportunities for soil and aquatic resources and also includes a balance with passive restoration opportunities	Potentially slower improvement, because of emphasis towards “passive restoration” with amount of land area allocated within MA1 – MA5.	Although more land allocated to MA6, compared to other alternatives, potentially slower improvement with the emphasis in commodity based management which could offset effects of active and passive restoration efforts
<b>Terrestrial Wildlife</b>				
Changes in forest composition, structure, and pattern	See Vegetation section above	See Vegetation section above	See Vegetation section above	See Vegetation section above
Acres of security habitat	Third most acres of security habitat	Second most acres of security habitat	Most acres of security habitat	Least acres of security habitat

Revision Topic (some Key Indicators)	Alternative			
	A	B Modified	C	D
<b>Access and Recreation</b>				
Percent of the Forest where roads & trails may be designated for motor vehicle use	76 percent	74 percent	67 percent	81 percent
Percent of the Forest where over-snow vehicle use is allowed	88 percent	87 percent	82 percent	90 percent
Percent of the Forest where over-snow vehicle use is consistent with desired condition	N/A	77 percent	68 percent	8 percent
Percent of the Forest where mechanized use is allowed	96 percent	91 percent	86 percent	94 percent
<b>Recommended Wilderness</b>				
Acres of recommended wilderness (includes overlapping MAs)	102,500 acres	105,300 acres	242,800 acres	37,300 acres
<b>Timber</b>				
Number of acres suitable for timber production	739,300 acres	793,700 acres	753,800 acres	852,700 acres
Percent Suitable	33 percent	36 percent	34 percent	38 percent
Predicted Volume Sold	50.5 MMBF	47.5 MMBF	36.8 MMBF	50.5 MMBF
Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ)	87.5 MMBF	80.2 MMBF	75.9 MMBF	98.7 MMBF

1 Desired Forest Condition (DFC)



# Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action

## Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, has prepared this final environmental impact statement (FEIS) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant federal and state laws and regulations. This FEIS discloses the environmental consequences that could result from the proposed action and alternatives. The document is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action** – This chapter includes information on the history of the proposal, the purpose of and need for the action, and the Agency's proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This chapter also describes the public involvement process.
- **Chapter 2. Alternatives, including the Proposed Action** – This chapter describes the alternatives developed to address the purpose and need for change. It also describes alternatives not considered in detail. A summary comparison of alternatives is provided at the end of the chapter.
- **Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences** – This chapter describes current conditions on the Kootenai National Forest (KNF) and the environmental consequences of implementing each alternative.
- **Chapter 4. List of Preparers** – This chapter provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the EIS.
- **Glossary** – The glossary provides definitions of terms used in this document.
- **Appendices** – The appendices (separate document) provide additional detailed information in support of the analyses presented in the EIS.
- **Map** – There is a separate, large-scale map of the management areas for Alternative B Modified. Maps of management areas for Alternatives C and D are the same as published with the DEIS, and are not reprinted with the FEIS.

## Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to revise the Land Management Plan (hereafter referred to as the “revised Forest Plan”) for the KNF. This revised Forest Plan is proposed to meet legal and regulatory requirements; and to address changes, issues, and concerns that have arisen since the Forest Plan was released in 1987. The area covered under this revision is shown in figure 2.

The draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) with the draft Forest Plan were published December of 2011 using the 1982 planning procedures as allowed by the 2000 Planning Regulations. The Notice of Availability was published January 6, 2012 in the *Federal Register*. The first notice indicated a 45 day comment period. The notice was corrected to specify our preference for a 90 day comment period. The comment period was extended 30 days, closing on May 7, 2012.

On March 23, 2012 the agency established a new planning rule (the 2012 Rule). The 2012 Planning Rule provides transition language at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(3), allowing the responsible official to elect to use the provisions of the prior planning regulations (1982 Planning Rule, dated September 30, 1982, and as amended) to prepare plan amendments and revisions. The

responsible official has elected to follow the provisions of the planning regulations in effect prior to May 9, 2012, referred to collectively in this document as the 1982 Planning Rule.

## The Planning Area

The KNF is located in the northwest corner of Montana (primarily within Lincoln and Sanders counties) and includes about 2.2 million acres of public land. The Forest administers the entire proclaimed Kootenai and a portion of the Kaniksu National Forest (figure 2). The KNF is divided into five ranger districts: Rexford, Fortine, Three Rivers, Libby, and the Cabinet. Seven geographic areas (GAs) are defined within the revised Plan: Bull, Clark, Fisher, Koocanusa, Libby, Tobacco, and Yaak. Two large rivers, the Kootenai and the Clark Fork, along with several smaller rivers and their tributaries, are major features of the Forest. The Whitefish Range, Purcell Mountains, Bitterroot Range, Salish Mountains, and Cabinet Mountains are all part of the rugged terrain radiating from the river valleys. In the north-central part of the Forest, the land is more open with gently rolling forested hills lying in the shadows of the Whitefish Range.

The KNF is one of the most diverse and productive forests in the Northern Region of the Forest Service. It is the home of several threatened and endangered plant and animal species; and it provides a diversity of aquatic and terrestrial habitat. Grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and bull trout are examples of some of these rare and listed species.

The principal population centers within the KNF are Libby, Troy, Eureka, and Trout Creek, Montana. Smaller communities that have social, economic, and historic ties to the KNF include Fortine, Trego, Stryker, the Yaak community, Rexford, Noxon, and Heron, Montana. The nearest larger urban areas, Spokane, Washington, and the Flathead Valley in Montana have a social and economic influence on the local communities as well. The majority of land administered by the KNF is located in Lincoln and Sanders counties in Montana with smaller portions of land in Flathead County, Montana and Boundary and Bonner counties in Idaho (table 3).

**Table 3. Acres and Percent Administered by the KNF, by County**

County	Acres Administered by KNF	Percent of County Administered by KNF
Bonner, ID	39,200	3%
Boundary, ID	10,300	1%
Flathead, MT	49,100	1%
Lincoln, MT	1,690,300	72%
Sanders, MT	428,500	24%
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>2,217,400</b>	





Figure 2. Kootenai National Forest Area Map

## Purpose

The purpose of the action is to revise the 1987 Forest Plan for the KNF. The final Forest Plan will guide natural resource management activities on the Forest, addressing changed conditions and direction that have occurred since the original Plan was released, while meeting the objectives of federal law, regulation, and policy.

## Need

The regional forester initiated revision based on legal requirements and significant changes that had occurred in conditions and demands since the 1987 Plan went into effect. The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) (2003) documents the need to establish or change forest plan management direction. Revision is also warranted because the Plan is beyond the 10 to 15 year duration provided by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) (16 U.S.C. 1606(e) (5) (A)).

Under the 1982 planning procedures, instructions to revise forest plans were formulated in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 36 CFR 219.10(g), 1982:

“A forest plan shall ordinarily be revised on a ten-year cycle or at least every 15 years. It also may be revised whenever the forest supervisor determines that conditions or demands in the area covered by the plan have changed significantly, or when changes in Resource Planning Act policies, goals, or objectives would have a significant effect on forest level programs.”

## Need for Change

The revision of the Forest Plan is based on a need for change. The need for change approach analyzes the entire Plan and proposes changes to the 1987 Plan where adjustments are necessary.

Monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the 1987 Forest Plan has helped identify management concerns, new issues, new information, and better ways to achieve goals, desired conditions, and objectives. Inventory information about the Forest's land and water resources is more accurate than it was in 1987, as a result of continued updates and new data management tools. The Forest now has geographic information system (GIS) technology, which greatly enhances analysis and the revision process. Knowledge of the physical, biological, and social processes occurring on the Forest has improved and increased during the life of the 1987 Forest Plan. This new and emerging information contributes to the need for revision.

The revision focuses on the most compelling needs for change in Forest Plan direction. These changes are generally important enough to:

- Affect large areas;
- Change the mix of goods and services produced; or
- Involve decisions in management direction where there is no public consensus on the best course of action.

### *Revision Topics*

Revision topics are broad categorizations of major issues that identify where resource conditions, technical knowledge, or public perceptions of resource management have created a potential “need for change.” The revision topics are the focus of this Forest Plan revision process. They address the central issues and public concerns to which future management of the KNF must respond. The revision topics provide the basis for development of the Proposed Action and alternatives.

The AMS identified seven primary ‘need for change’ or revision topics:

- Vegetation
- Fire Risk
- Watershed and Aquatic Species
- Terrestrial Wildlife
- Access and Recreation
- Recommended Wilderness
- Timber Production

The following is a summary of each revision topic, including an issue statement, a description of the need for changes, and key indicators. For more information on revision topics, see the AMS.

### *Vegetation*

**Issue Statement:** Forest Plan management strategies may affect the composition, structure, and landscape pattern of forests. This could influence the susceptibility and resiliency of the forests to significant disturbance agents such as large intense wildfires, insect and disease epidemics, weather events, and climate change.

**Need for Change:** The focus on vegetation was largely due to concerns that the forest composition, structure, and pattern had shifted away from historical conditions to the extent that ecosystems, and the goods and services that it provided, may not be sustainable, especially in light of potential impacts from climate change.

This issue was used to develop desired condition descriptions for vegetation at various scales (e.g., forestwide and for each of three biophysical settings) and was used in the development of management direction (goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines). The analysis conducted for this issue focuses on changes that may occur to forest composition, structure, landscape patterns of forest conditions, and the resistance and resiliency of the forest to disturbances and stressors, and lastly, the ability of the forest vegetation to sequester carbon. This analysis provides a foundation for how terrestrial vegetation may influence other resources such as wildlife habitat, aquatic resources, timber production, and fire risk.

**Key Indicators:**

- Forest composition and structure – predicted changes to tree species composition and structure (tree size classes, old growth, and snags);
- Landscape pattern of the forest – potential changes to the patterns of forest conditions (e.g., successional stages, species composition, tree density, and fuels) on the landscape;
- Resistance and resiliency of the forest vegetation to disturbances and stressors – effects of the alternatives on the hazard of wildfire, key insects and diseases, weather disturbances, and climate change; and
- Carbon sequestration.

***Fire***

**Issue Statement:** Forest Plan management strategies may affect the restoration and maintenance of the fire-adapted ecosystems on the KNF. In the wildland urban interface (WUI), the Forest Plan management strategies may affect the amount, arrangement, and type of hazardous fuels that exist; and therefore, the risk that potential wildfires pose to life, private property, and other values in these areas (e.g., campgrounds, utility improvements, communication sites, and scenery values).

**Need for Change:** In order to restore and maintain the fire-adapted ecosystems on the Forest, there is a need to expand the use of wildland fire (both prescribed fire and natural, unplanned ignitions) as a management tool.

A substantial amount of acreage on the KNF is fairly remote in terms of road access. In many of these areas, it can be difficult or undesirable to use mechanical treatments to manage the vegetation in order to help achieve the desired forest conditions. Therefore, in these areas, it is especially important to consider the use of fire when and where it is appropriate.

The AMS identified fire risk in the WUI as a growing concern since the 1987 Forest Plan was developed and recognized the need for more direction and emphasis on this issue in the final Forest Plan.

**Key Indicators:**

- How much, where, and under what conditions prescribed fire and natural, unplanned ignitions may be used to help achieve desired conditions; and
- How much fuel treatment is anticipated and the relative reduction in risk that could occur.

### *Watershed, Soils, Riparian, Aquatic Habitat, and Aquatic Species*

**Issue Statement:** Land management activities conducted under the Forest Plan management strategy have the potential to affect soil productivity, alter the distribution and abundance of aquatic species, change water quality, and modify riparian function.

**Need for Change:** There are two primary reasons that the 1987 Forest Plan needs to be revised for watershed and aquatic dependent resources. The first is to establish management direction that recognizes and emphasizes watershed restoration activities and the second is to address changes in the physical and biological components of the aquatic ecosystem, such as water quality impairments, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, soil productivity; and riparian and aquatic habitat conditions.

**Key Indicators:**

- Trend in watershed condition rating;
- Trend in soil productivity;
- Trend in water quality;
- Trend in riparian ecosystem function; and
- Trend in quality of aquatic habitats.

### *Terrestrial Wildlife*

**Issue Statement:** Forest Plan management strategies may affect habitat for terrestrial wildlife species, including species that are listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Northern Region sensitive species, and forest management indicator species (MIS).

**Need for Change:** Since the 1987 Forest Plan, several changes have occurred that resulted in subsequent modifications in how we manage both species and habitats. The revised Forest Plan needs to address these changes.

Species listed as threatened and endangered have changed. Additionally, the sensitive species list has been amended. Knowledge related to habitat management for grizzly bear continue to evolve.

Items such as fragmentation, patch size, biodiversity, and ecosystem management strategies have evolved and need to be incorporated into the Forest Plan. Current plan direction for special habitats may not be adequate. In 2001, it was determined that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act applied to all federal agencies. The state of Montana completed an elk management plan in 2004, with specific habitat and population goals and objectives that did not always match those found in the Forest Plan (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks 2004).

The analyses done in preparation for the Forest Plan revision show that physical and biological components of terrestrial wildlife habitats have changed, resulting in increased or decreased suitable habitat, depending on the wildlife species.

**Key Indicators:**

- Changes in forest composition, structure, and pattern; and
- Security habitat (non-motorized areas).

## *Access and Recreation*

**Issue Statement:** Forest Plan management strategies may affect recreation resources, experiences, and opportunities.

**Need for Change:** Access, specifically the motorized and non-motorized use of National Forest System (NFS) lands, is recognized as one of the most controversial topics, both internally and externally, in forest management today. Because of this level of controversy, it is appropriate to address motorized and non-motorized use as part of the Forest Plan revision.

The 1987 Plan does not provide adequate direction to address the changes in recreation demands, technology, and shifts in management practices that have occurred over the past two decades. This issue was used in the development of forestwide and management area direction.

### **Key Indicators:**

- Percent of the Forest and location of areas where roads and trails may be designated for motor vehicle use;
- Percent of the Forest and location of areas where over-snow vehicle use is allowed;
- Percent of the Forest and location of areas where mechanized use is allowed;
- Percent of the Forest and location managed in the various recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classes; and
- Percent of the Forest managed for various scenery management systems and scenic integrity objective categories.

## *Recommended Wilderness*

**Issue Statement:** Management strategies for recommended wilderness may affect recreation opportunities and experiences within recommended wilderness areas.

**Need for Change:** There is continuing controversy associated with the management of IRAs, as well as updating guidance provided in the 1987 Forest Plan to reflect current direction for recommended wilderness. Evaluation of existing wilderness and areas for wilderness potential is a requirement of Forest Plan revision (1982 regulations 36 CFR 219.17).

### **Key Indicator:**

- Acres of recommended wilderness.

## *Timber*

**Issue Statement:** Forest Plan management strategies may affect the amount of lands suitable for timber production and sustainable timber volume managed by the Forest.

**Need for Change:** The 1987 Forest Plan established an allowable sale quantity (ASQ) as the maximum level of timber that could be harvested. Timber production levels have been well below the ASQ established in the 1987 KNF Plan. While timber harvest levels have not exceeded the maximums established in the ASQ, they also have not met expectations for management and output levels. Even though ASQ is the maximum harvest level, there was an expectation by the public that this level was achievable and predicted. The analysis conducted for the 1987 Forest Plan used this level of harvest in estimating effects from timber management on other resources and the impact to local jobs and income. With the reduced timber harvest

levels, there is a need to reanalyze timber harvest levels and estimate the effects on other resources and the local communities.

The management direction in the 1987 Forest Plan emphasized the production of timber, with the majority of MAs allowing or promoting timber management. In the 1990s, the Forest Service began to focus on ecosystem management and ecological sustainability. This change in policy and direction resulted in a decreased emphasis on commercial timber production and an increased emphasis on timber harvest as a tool to restore vegetation or as a means to address other resource requirements or needs. There is a need to reanalyze timber harvest levels and revise them.

In addition, evaluation of timber suitability is required to be reviewed every 10 years (1982 regulations 36 CFR 219.14). Since the adoption of the 1987 Forest Plan, many changes to timber suitability have occurred.

**Key Indicators:**

- Number of acres suitable for timber production;
- Allowable sale quantity and predicted timber volume sold; and
- Long-term sustained yield capacity.

***Other Topics***

Additional topics were identified where there is a need to incorporate current law, regulation, or policy as well as current data and science. The Plan direction that addresses these topics is common to all action alternatives:

- Air Quality
- Lands and Special Uses
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Research Natural Areas
- Special Areas
- Cultural Resources
- American Indian Rights and Interests
- Minerals
- Grazing
- Special Forest and Botanical Products
- Social and Economic systems
- Cooperation and Community Involvement

**Public Involvement**

In April 2002, a notice of intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register*, announcing that revision of the 1987 LMP had begun and asked for comment on preliminary issues, topics, and the preliminary proposed action. Informal discussions with the public regarding needed changes to the current Forest Plan began with a series of public meetings in 2002. This input, along with science-based evaluations, was used to determine the need for change. Additional meetings, correspondence, news releases, comment periods, and other tools were utilized to gather

feedback from the public, forest employees, tribal governments, federal and state agencies, and local governments.

In March 2003 the AMS and AMS Technical Report (USDA Forest Service 2003 March) were released to the public. The AMS documented the need for change, the seven primary revision topics, and the KNF proposed action identified from public comment and internal (Forest Service) input.

From April 2002 to May 2004, the KNF hosted public meetings, open houses, field trips, and workgroup meetings. Approximately 15 informational and comment meetings in and around the local communities took place during the scoping process, which started in April 2002, with the NOI in the *Federal Register* and ended in May 2004. In addition to the public meetings, briefings and meetings were held with the Tribes, Congressional representatives, other elected officials, other agencies, and interest groups.

In addition, the KNF hosted approximately 42 workgroup meetings from August 2003 to May 2004. These meetings were held in the communities within the KNF and the workgroups focused on the geographic areas (GAs) surrounding each of these communities. The purpose of these workgroup meetings was to: 1) share information about the revision topics; 2) collaboratively discuss and develop desired conditions for each of the revision topics within the workgroup's GAs; and 3) gain an understanding of the issues and appreciation of others' viewpoints.

A draft Content Analysis Report, prepared in 2004, summarized what the KNF had learned from people that responded to the preliminary proposed action, revision topics, and need for change. The report was based on information from various public and workgroup meetings, open houses, field trips, invited group presentations, and meetings with tribal partners, agency partners, and elected officials up to that time.

Under the 1982 Planning Rule, the Forest was required to prepare an EIS in conjunction with the revised LMP. Therefore, beginning in June 2004, based on what the KNF learned during internal and external public participation and collaboration, the Forest and revision interdisciplinary team (IDT) developed alternative themes utilizing and identifying suitable uses for various forest management purposes. These themes were designed to reflect a mix of different management philosophies based on the Forest's dialogue with members of the public, other agencies and governments, tribal partners, and employees. These alternative themes were shared with the public and workgroups during meetings held in the winter of 2004-2005.

In January of 2005, a new planning rule was released that did not require an EIS, and thus, a final set of alternatives was never developed. Emphasis shifted to the development of a "starting option" map. The starting option map was created utilizing the preliminary alternatives, revision topics, public scoping comments, and input from the workgroups and other meetings.

The starting option map and associated direction was the focus of many public/workgroup meetings in July to September of 2005. The purpose of the workgroup meetings was for a diverse group of people to come together to discuss the starting option map and try and reach agreement on potential changes to suggest to the forest supervisor. From July to September 2005, the KNF hosted more than 33 workgroup meetings in the same communities focusing on the GAs. The purpose of these workgroup meetings was to: 1) share the starting option map and discuss how it was developed; 2) validate the information on the starting option map; and 3) collaboratively discuss any possible changes to the starting option map. In addition to the workgroup meetings, briefings and meetings were held with the Tribes, Congressional

representatives, other elected officials, other agencies, and interest groups. Several elected officials, Congressional staffers, and other agency representatives participated in the workgroup meetings.

In October 2005 the draft Proposed Plan map, showing the major changes and providing the rationale for changes to the starting option map, was released to the public and workgroups. The revision IDT incorporated input from the starting option map into the Proposed Land Management Plan, which was released on May 12, 2006, for a 90-day public comment period. The comment period was extended an additional 30 days and ended September 11, 2006. Released along with the Proposed Land Management Plan was the draft Comprehensive Evaluation Report (CER). The draft CER built upon the AMS and documented the evaluation of the 1987 Forest Plan and proposed changes. The draft CER evaluated current social, economic, and ecological conditions and trends that contribute to sustainability and served as the principle document that supported the need to establish, amend, or revise a Plan. The draft CER identified factors that affect conditions and trends, and included information of what are causing conditions to change, and described the influence plan implementation would have on moving toward desired conditions.

Public comment on the Proposed Plan and draft CER was analyzed and documented in a report, *The Analysis of Public Comment Report* (March 2007). Based on public and agency comments the revision IDT began to develop the final LMP. A court injunction (March 30, 2007) resulted in suspension of Forest Plan revision activities under the 2005 Planning Rule. The 2008 Planning Rule was released in April of 2008 and Forest Plan revision resumed under that Rule. A final Plan release was anticipated for winter of 2009 when a court ruling invalidated the 2008 Planning Rule in June 2009. The 2000 Planning Rule was reinstated in December of 2009. The 2000 Planning Rule was amended in 2002 to allow the Forest Service to follow the procedures of the 1982 Planning Rule.

The Forest issued a second NOI in March 2010 to revise the Forest Plan using the 1982 procedures under the 2000 Planning Rule. All the public comment received on the various Forest Plan revision products over the life of the Plan revision were used in developing the draft Forest Plan and DEIS.

The draft Forest Plan and DEIS were released for public comment in January of 2012. Open houses were held in the communities throughout the Forest in January and February to share information regarding the documents and the process for commenting. The initial 90-day comment period for the draft EIS was extended an additional 30 days through May 7 of 2012. Numerous meetings were held with interested publics and elected officials during the 120 day comment period. Comments received during this 120-day comment period have been responded to in appendix G of the FEIS.

## Decision Framework

The responsible official for this analysis is the regional forester. Based on the analysis and subsequent public comments, the responsible official will select an alternative to revise the Forest Plan and document the rationale in a record of decision (ROD). Forest Plan approval results in:

1. Establishment of forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives, including a description of the desired condition of the KNF and an identification of the



quantities of goods and services that are expected to be produced during the planning period, as required by 36 CFR 219.11(b);

2. Establishment of forestwide standards and guidelines to fulfill the requirements 16 USC 1604 applying to future activities and resource integration requirements in 36 CFR 219.13 through 219.27;
3. Establishment of Management Area (MA) direction (multiple-use prescriptions) with associated standards and guidelines, including possible actions (see appendix A of the revised Forest Plan), as required by 36 CFR 219.11(c);
4. Establishment of monitoring and evaluation requirements that provide a basis for a periodic determination and evaluation of the effects of management practices, as required by 36 CFR 219.11(d);
5. Recommendation of wilderness to Congress, as required by 36 CFR 219.17(a); and
6. Determination of suitability and potential capability of lands for resource production (timber and grazing), as required by 36 CFR 219.14 and 219.20.

The Plan will set a course of action for managing the Forest for the next 10 to 15 years. However, project level environmental analysis will still need to be completed for specific proposals to implement the direction in the Forest Plan.

## Related Decisions Which Implement the Forest Plan

The six Forest Plan decisions listed above are strategic. Implementation of the Forest Plan generally requires a site- or project-specific analysis and decision(s). However, there are situations where a site-specific decision is made at a strategic level, with the Forest Plan ROD. For example, a strategic decision may allocate an area as non-motorized to provide quiet recreation or to protect wildlife in winter range. To provide for this type of condition, the Plan would include a standard to not allow motor vehicle use. The Forest Plan ROD would then make a site-specific decision that restricts where motorized use can and cannot occur across broad areas and closure orders would be simultaneously issued with the decision.

## Relationship to Other Entities

Forest Service planning regulations require the agency to consider other federal, state and local government, and tribal plans and policies. As part of the outreach effort, a number of discussions with federal, state, local, and tribal representatives were initiated.

### *County Governments*

Beginning with initiation of the planning process, local government officials from the counties within the KNF lands were invited to participate in Forest Plan development. All county plans were considered as the planning process developed.

### *State*

Several Montana State agencies are affected by, or affect, Forest Service management. These include Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Montana State Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Natural Resource Conservation, and Montana Department of Transportation. The Forest coordinated information with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks and Montana State Environmental Protection Agency during all phases of the process. These offices provided

formal comments during the scoping and other public involvement stages. Statewide assessments were considered in the development of the revised Forest Plan.

### *Tribes*

The forest supervisor and members of the planning team met with tribal representatives from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho during development of the revised Forest Plan. As a result, specific tribal comments were incorporated in this EIS and revised Forest Plan.

### *Federal*

Management of federal lands adjacent to the KNF was considered in the formulation of alternatives and their cumulative effects.

Consideration of national scenic and historic trails, utility corridors, recommended wilderness, and other management concerns across boundaries were discussed with the Flathead and Lolo National Forests. The forests met to ensure management problems weren't created because of KNF revised Forest Plan direction.

## Relationship to Other Assessments or National Policy

There are several broad scale assessments or national policies in place that affect management decisions on the KNF. Following is a brief description of these assessments or policies and their effect on the KNF Plan revision.

### *National Scale*

In March 1999, the Committee of Scientists published a report entitled, "Sustaining the Peoples' Lands: Recommendations for Stewardship of the National Forests and Grasslands into the Next Century" (USDA Forest Service 1999). This report emphasizes ecosystem management and the need for sustainability of all forest lands. The report also emphasizes the need for standards and guidelines, or any other technical requirements, to be based on scientific research. The KNF has incorporated this guidance by using accepted scientific data and recovery plans as the basis for developing resource-specific requirements.

Policy decisions, such as the Healthy Forest Initiative, National Fire Plan, and the Associated Cohesive Strategy direct the management of national forests to curb uncharacteristic wildfire and reduce the risks to people, property, and resources. These policies, where compatible with the biological and physical capabilities of the land and other national forest objectives, were considered in the development of the proposed action.

In July 2010, the Chief of the Forest Service announced the National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change and the Performance Scorecard. The Forest, in partnership with the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, completed a USDA Forest Service Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests Planning Zone (KIPZ) Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b), parts of which are incorporated in this EIS, and where applicable, used to guide revised forest plan elements.

### *Regional Scale*

Regional assessments consider different geographic scales and can help identify or maintain future public land management options. As part of the context for revision efforts, it was

important to consider the findings and management strategies contained in these larger assessments, such as the Columbia River Basin Assessment (2003) and the Northern Region Overview (USDA Forest Service 1998 October) and how they applied to the Forest.

### *Forestwide Scale*

In October 1995, the social and economic assessment for the KNF was completed under private contract and updated in 2003. An analysis on conditions and trends of the social and economic environment for the planning zone was also completed in 2006. This information was used in describing current conditions and as a basis for the effects analysis.

In October 2008, the Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation; Applicability to the National Forests in Idaho (Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C)) was made into law. The Rule designated 250 Idaho Roadless Areas and established five management themes that provide prohibitions with exceptions or conditioned permissions governing road construction, timber cutting, and discretionary mineral development (73 FR 201 [61456-61496]). The Rule provided a basis for MA direction for inventoried roadless areas on the KNF that are in Idaho.

Monitoring and evaluation reports for the 1987 Forest Plan contributed significantly to the knowledge of the need for change.



## Chapter 2. Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action

### Introduction

This chapter describes and compares the alternatives considered for the KNF revised Forest Plan. This section also presents the alternatives in comparative form, describing the differences between each alternative and providing a clear basis for choice among options by the decision maker and the public. The revision includes changing all, or a portion of, the programmatic decisions that make up the Plan. This chapter provides the following five discussions:

1. Development of alternatives;
2. Elements common to all alternatives;
3. Description of each alternative;
4. Alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study; and
5. Comparison of alternatives.

### Development of Alternatives

As discussed in chapter 1, this revision of the Forest Plan is based on “need for change.” Only those topics specifically identified as a need for change, are being changed. A list of key issues, or revision topics, based on the need for change was identified. These topics drove alternative development. A list of issues common to all alternatives was also developed. Some additional items are addressed in the revision because they are required by planning regulations (i.e., 36 CFR 219.14 through 219.26 (1982)).

Alternative A, the “no-action alternative,” reflects current management practices under the 1987 Forest Plan, as amended and implemented, and provides the basis for comparing alternatives to current management and levels of output. While all alternatives provide a wide range of multiple uses, goods, and services, some give slightly greater emphasis to selected resources based on the theme of the alternative and response to revision topics.

Alternatives to the no-action alternative were based on the need for change identified in the AMS (2003), implementation and monitoring of the current Plan, workgroup meetings (2003-2004), informational and comment meetings (2002-2004), public issues raised during review of the AMS and scoping, public comments on the Proposed Land Management Plan in 2006, comments received on the NOI published in 2010, and comments on the draft Forest Plan and DEIS (2012). Alternatives represent a range of possible management options from which to choose. Each alternative emphasizes specific land and resource uses and de-emphasizes other uses in response to the revision topics. This is done by changing management area allocations, resulting in trade-offs between the alternatives.

Forest Plans do not make budget decisions. However, alternatives emphasize different programs to different degrees, with an expectation of appropriate funding. Should Congress emphasize specific programs by appropriation, a redistribution of priorities would follow, regardless of the alternative implemented.

All reasonable alternatives to the Proposed Action must meet the purpose and need for change and address one or more of the revision topics. These alternatives are considered for detailed study. However, not all possible alternatives were carried into detailed study as the list of options

would have been prohibitively large. Instead, the responsible official identified those alternatives that both met the criteria and created a reasonable range of outputs, direction, costs, management requirements, and effects from which to choose.

## Important Points about all Alternatives

All alternatives represent, to varying degrees, the philosophies of multiple-use and ecological and economic sustainability. The alternatives provide basic protection of forest resources and comply fully with environmental laws. All the alternatives would:

- Meet law, regulation, and policy;
- Incorporate ecosystem management objectives and strategies and contribute towards ecological, social, and economic sustainability;
- Meet the purpose and need for change and address one or more significant issues (revision topics);
- Provide integrated restoration direction as included in the forestwide goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines;
- Retain all existing permitted activities and facilities<sup>1</sup>; and
- Provide sustainable and predictable levels of products and services.

## The Preferred Alternative

The responsible official, the regional forester for the Northern Region, has identified Alternative B Modified as the preferred alternative for this FEIS. The preferred alternative is reflected in the revised Forest Plan and rationale for its selection is documented in the draft ROD which accompanies this document.

## Description of Alternatives

### *Management Areas*

For the action alternatives, management area prescriptions have been grouped into categories which have similar management characteristics. For example, MA1 is broken down into subcategories, which represent designated wilderness (MA1a), recommended wilderness (MA1b), and wilderness study area (WSA) (MA1c). Management areas range from little human-caused alteration to the Forest (MA1 – wilderness) and focus on passive management to more substantial human-caused change (MA7 – primary recreation areas) and focus on active management. Each alternative allocates different amounts of land to the MA. For a more complete description of categories and MA prescriptions, see the revised Forest Plan. Alternative A (1987 Forest Plan as amended and implemented) was not remapped with these new MAs. Table 4 displays whether there is a MA from the 1987 Forest Plan that corresponds to the revised Forest Plan, or whether this is a new MA.

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<sup>1</sup> All permits will be reviewed for compliance with the new Plan. Any permit found to be out of compliance will be brought into compliance as soon as practicable using a variety of tools, including modifications or amendments to the permit.

**Table 4. Revised Forest Plan Management Area Descriptions Common to All Action Alternatives**

<b>MA</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Category Description</b>	<b>1987 MA</b>
<b>1a</b>	<b>Wilderness Designated</b>	The KNF manages one Congressionally designated wilderness area – the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness – as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. If, over the life of this Plan, Congress designates any additional wilderness areas on the KNF, those areas would be allocated to this MA (FSM 1923 and 2320; FSH 2409.19).	7
<b>1b</b>	<b>Recommended Wilderness</b>	These areas are recommended as additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System. The wilderness character and potential for each area recommended to be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System is to remain intact until Congressional action is taken.	8
<b>1c</b>	<b>Wilderness Study Area (WSA)</b>	The KNF manages one Congressionally designated WSA – the Ten Lakes WSA.	9
<b>2</b>	<b>Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers</b>	This MA applies to river segments that have been identified as eligible for inclusion as part of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System under the authority granted by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended.	New <sup>2</sup>
<b>3</b>	<b>Special Areas</b>	These areas are administratively designated areas and managed to protect and conserve the values for which they were identified.	21
<b>4</b>	<b>Research Natural Areas (RNAs)</b>	Research natural areas are established to provide for research, observation, and study and are designated jointly with the Forest Service Research Station. The KNF has eight established RNAs totaling 5,210 acres under the 1987 Plan.	21
<b>5a</b>	<b>Backcountry<sup>1</sup></b>	These areas provide semi-primitive non-motorized recreation year-round.	2, 29
<b>5b</b>	<b>Backcountry<sup>1</sup></b>	These areas provide motorized and non-motorized recreation year-round (motorized summer only on designated routes/areas).	3, 29
<b>5c</b>	<b>Backcountry<sup>1</sup></b>	These areas provide semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation year-round and over-snow motor vehicle recreation.	new
<b>6</b>	<b>General Forest</b>	Most of this MA consists of relatively large areas with roads, trails, structures, and signs of forest management activities. This MA provides a variety of recreation opportunities, both motorized and non-motorized. This MA contains lands suitable for timber production, with timber harvest contributing to regulated timber harvest estimates. Some lands within this MA are not suitable for timber production, based on the timber suitability analysis.	Mixture of: 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, and 31
<b>7</b>	<b>Primary Recreation Areas</b>	This MA applies to two areas on the KNF. They are the Turner Mountain Ski area and the area around Lake Koocanusa.	6, 30

<sup>1</sup> Backcountry areas are relatively large areas, generally without roads, and provide a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities

<sup>2</sup> Although the 1987 Forest Plan was amended to include eligible wild and scenic rivers, there was no management area defined for this feature

## Elements Common to Alternatives

All alternatives in this document adhere to multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services (36 CFR 219.1(a), (b)). In addition, they share objectives and standards for managing forest resources and complying with applicable laws and policies. They also contain the same direction to contribute to the diversity of desired native and non-native plant and animal communities and contribute toward the recovery of threatened and endangered species. Forestwide direction identified in the Plan would apply to all action alternatives. The difference between alternatives is primarily the difference in allocation of acres by MA to meet the purpose and need for change and address one or more of the revision topics.

Each alternative was developed with the intent of complying with all applicable law and regulation, as well as national policy and direction, including but not limited to the Healthy Forests Initiative, National Fire Plan, and National Energy Policy. Each alternative retains the following existing decisions to the 1987 Forest Plan and their associated Biological Opinions:

- Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) (Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (1995));
- Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (ROD, USDA Forest Service 2007 March); and
- Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (USDA Forest Service 2011 November (FSEIS and ROD)).

Direction for the retained decisions is located in appendix B of the revised Forest Plan.

The following would not change between alternatives:

- **Revised Forest Plan Goals, Desired Conditions, Standards, and Guidelines** – Management area and forestwide direction for goals, desired condition, standards, and guidelines remains constant for all action alternatives.
- **Developed Recreation Sites** – Existing developed recreation sites are retained in all alternatives. Alternatives do not make decisions to remove or to create developed recreation sites. Allocation of primary recreation areas (MA7) remains constant for all action alternatives.
- **Utility Rights-of-Way and Communication Sites** – Direction for, and location of, designated utility rights-of-way and communication sites remains constant for all alternatives.
- **Wilderness Study Area** – The Wilderness Study Area on the Forest was established by an Act of Congress in 1977. The Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area and its management would continue as outlined by the Wilderness Study Act, regardless of which alternative is selected for implementation.
- **Designated Wilderness** – The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Designation remains constant for all alternatives.

### *Alternative A — No-action Alternative*

This alternative reflects the 1987 Forest Plan, as amended to date, and accounts for current laws and regulations. New information, inventories (e.g., tentatively suitable timber lands), and technologies (e.g., Spectrum Model) were used to evaluate this alternative. Output levels were recalculated for this alternative based on Forest Plan amendments and new sources of information. The no-action alternative retains the 1987 Forest Plan goals, objectives, standards,



and guidelines, and MA prescriptions, as amended. This alternative serves as the baseline for comparison with the action alternatives.

This alternative satisfies the NFMA procedures (36 CFR 219.12(f)(7)) to reflect the current level of goods and services provided by the Forest and the most likely amount of goods and services expected to be provided in the future, if current management direction continues.

### Alternative A Relationship to Revision Topics and Need for Change

**Vegetation:** The 1987 Forest Plan does not contain direction on moving towards historic conditions or to improve resistance and resiliency in the light of climate change. Continued deviation from historic conditions would lead to changes in disturbance and succession processes, making it difficult to provide for a sustainable ecosystem. Old growth is managed to provide for a minimum of 10 percent of effective and replacement old growth.

**Fire:** Under the 1987 Forest Plan, each MA lists standards for prescribed fire and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions. The AMS identified several impediments to the use of natural, unplanned ignitions in the 1987 Forest Plan. The MAs were numerous and generally small in size. Adjoining MAs often had different or unclear direction on the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives and this resulted in creating a difficult situation for developing subsequent fire management plans and implementing an integrated fire management program. Also, because the 1987 Forest Plan did not contain an emphasis or much analysis on the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives, it was generally believed that the Plan did not adequately authorize the use of that tool.

**Watersheds, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Habitats/Species:** Legacy effects from past timber harvest, mining, and other human-caused disturbances continue to effect watershed condition and health. The 1987 Forest Plan, as amended by the INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995), provides a passive conservation/restoration strategy and reduces the risk to watersheds and aquatic biota from many current land management activities. INFISH standards and guidelines contain general direction for addressing negative effects from past management related to roads, livestock grazing, and recreation, but is lacking for other resources (e.g., timber harvest, mining) and did not address the need to actively restore watershed, soil, and aquatic ecosystems.

**Terrestrial Wildlife:** Since the 1987 Plan, research shows that certain forest cover types are not as well represented as they were historically. There has been a shift from late and early succession forest to a more uniform mid-succession forest. The size of uninterrupted blocks of forest is smaller than it was historically. Current direction for some habitats may not be adequate for species needing those habitats (e.g., snags, down wood).

**Access and Recreation:** Roads would continue to be managed to meet requirements (36 CFR 212). Motorized recreation opportunities on roads and trails would be determined by project level travel management decisions and displayed on motor vehicle use maps (MVUMs). Alternative A would continue to provide both motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities as well as opportunities for mechanized use (e.g., mountain bikes) and over-snow motorized use. Existing developed recreation sites would be maintained. Dispersed recreation opportunities would continue to be available. Motor vehicle use on roads and trails may be allowed on 76 percent of the NFS lands on the KNF. Over-snow vehicle use would be allowed on 88 percent and mechanized use on 96 percent of the land base.

**Recommended Wilderness:** The 1987 Forest Plan recommended 78,500 acres for wilderness designation (allocated to MA8): the Scotchman Peaks recommended wilderness (36,200 acres

(in addition to 22,000 acres on the IPNF, which joins the Kootenai portion of the Scotchman area and is also recommended for wilderness in the 1987 IPNF Forest Plan)); 35,500 acres of Cabinet Mountain Wilderness additions; and 6,800 acres in the Northeast corner of the Forest, along the periphery of the Ten Lakes Montana Wilderness Study Area. The Forest Plan also recommended an additional 26,000 acres within the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area (allocated to MA9) for wilderness designation. The total acres recommended as wilderness under the 1987 Forest Plan is 102,500.

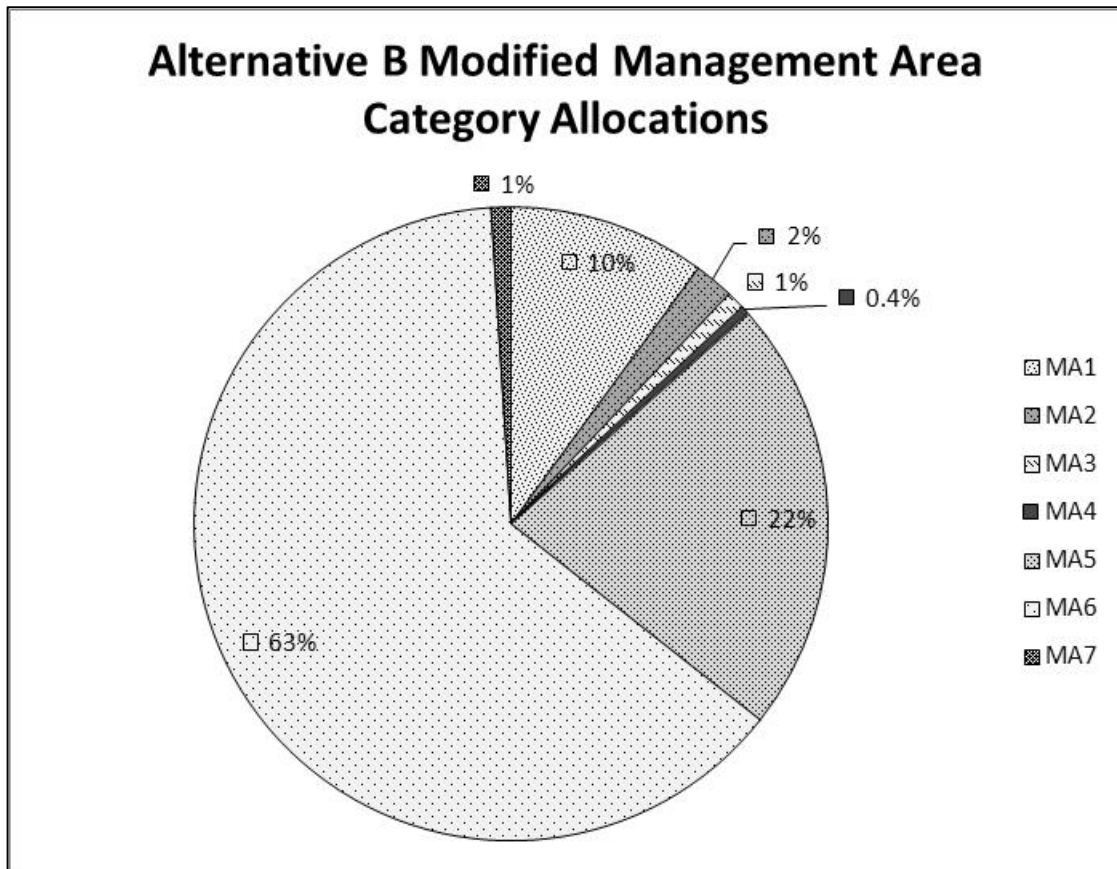
**Timber:** Based on historic and current condition and trends, timber harvest levels would continue to be well below the ASQ in the Plan of 227 million board feet (MMBF)<sup>2</sup>. Direction is to maximize growth and yield through short rotations, a high use of regeneration harvest, and intensive timber management. The 1987 Forest Plan emphasizes timber production and does not incorporate ecosystem management and principles of ecological sustainability. Suitable timberlands would continue to be adjusted to make corrections to the 1987 Forest Plan. Based on adjustments for Plan amendments and new data, lands suitable for timber production equal 739,300 acres or 33 percent of the Forest. Based on modeling for Plan revision, the predicted volume sold for the first decade is 50.5 MMBF/year and the ASQ (unconstrained budget) 87.5 MMBF/year.

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<sup>2</sup> The 1987 Forest Plan set the ASQ at 227 MMBF annually. In November, 1995, the Chief of the Forest Service issued a decision on a Forest Plan appeal related to a technical error in the calculation of the KNF's ASQ. The issue centered on how timber age classes were catalogued in the inventory information used to calculate ASQ. A description of the problem is in the FY92 Monitoring and Evaluation Report. The decision required that the Forest is not to exceed a sell volume of 150 MMBF per year until the Forest Plan is either amended or revised.

### *Alternative B Modified – Proposed Action*

This alternative is based on Alternative B from the DEIS, with modifications in response to comments. This alternative is the revised Forest Plan. It is the result of collaborative efforts since 2003 and responds to the identified purpose and need. This alternative emphasizes moving towards desired future conditions and contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Alternative B Modified would manage approximately 5 percent of the Forest as recommended wilderness (MA1b), 22 percent as backcountry (MA5), and 63 percent as general forest (MA6) (see figure 3).



**Figure 3. Allocation by MA Group – Alternative B Modified**

### **Alternative B Modified Relationship to Revision Topics**

**Vegetation:** Movement towards desired future condition would be emphasized in MA6 (63 percent of the Forest) and would rely on a variety of management techniques (e.g., timber harvest, planting, thinning, natural unplanned ignitions, prescribed burns, and mechanical fuel treatment). MA1 and 5 (approximately 32 percent of the land allocation in this alternative) emphasize using natural ecological processes (e.g., plant succession) and disturbances (e.g., fire, insects, and diseases) as the primary forces affecting the vegetation. Management practices to restore vegetation on these MAs would include natural, unplanned ignitions for resource benefit and prescribed burns. Some mechanical treatments (e.g., timber harvest) may occur in backcountry (MA5) areas. The amount of acres of ponderosa pine, western larch, and white pine increase while Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine decrease. The amount of large/very large stands and lands managed for old growth increase over time.

**Fire:** This alternative emphasizes the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives and prescribed fire, particularly in the backcountry (MA5 – 487,400 acres). The direction also emphasizes hazardous fuels reduction in the WUI.

**Watersheds, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Habitats/Species:** Under Alternative B Modified and relative to the other alternatives, there would potentially be the most rapid trend toward desired conditions for these resources, through a combination of active and passive restoration efforts, with passive restoration emphasized in MAs 1 through 5 and active restoration focused primarily in areas allocated to MA6. The potential for more vegetation management under this alternative assumes a corresponding potential for increased restoration activities in other resource areas, as the Forest moves towards a more integrated approach to resource management.

**Terrestrial Wildlife:** This alternative allocates 230,500 acres to MA1 and 487,400 acres to MA5 which would maintain areas of large undisturbed land and habitat for forest interior species. These MAs also emphasize natural processes with minimal human intervention/disturbance, providing wildlife security habitat. This alternative also has opportunities for active restoration of vegetative conditions (wildlife habitat) that are currently outside of desired conditions (MA6 – 63 percent or 1,408,800 acres).

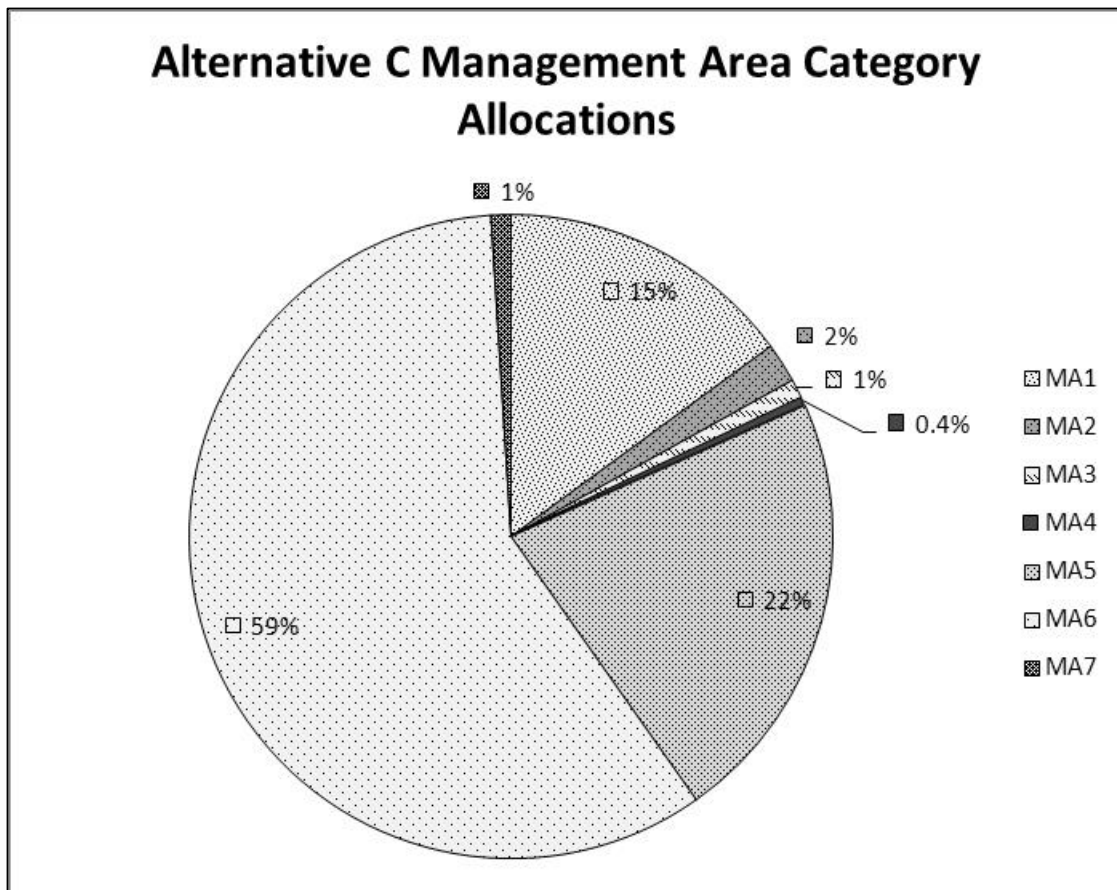
**Access and Recreation:** Motorized recreation opportunities on roads and trails would be determined by travel management decisions and displayed on MVUMs. Alternative B Modified would provide the opportunity for motor vehicle use (may be allowed on roads and trails) on 74 percent of the Forest. Over-snow vehicle use would be allowed on 87 percent of the Forest and mechanized use (e.g., mountain bikes) on 91 percent of the Forest. Dispersed recreation opportunities would continue to be available with some improvements made to concentrated use areas.

**Recommended Wilderness:** This alternative recommends 105,300 acres for wilderness. This includes recommending three new wilderness areas (Roderick at 23,500 acres, Scotchman Peaks at 35,900 acres, Whitefish Divide at 16,000 acres) and recommending 29,900 acres added to the existing Cabinet Mountain Wilderness.

**Timber:** There are 793,700 acres suited for timber production (or 36 percent of the Forest). The predicted volume sold for the first decade is 47.5 MMBF/year and the ASQ (unconstrained budget) is 80.2 MMBF/year.

### Alternative C

Alternative C emphasizes wilderness values and protection of backcountry (MA5) while moving towards desired conditions. To move towards watershed and vegetation desired conditions there is an increased emphasis on natural disturbance processes, with an increased use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives. There is also an increased emphasis on prescribed fire, in addition to mechanical treatments, to move towards desired conditions. Alternative C would have more opportunities for backcountry non-motorized recreation (MA1 – 342,600 acres; MA5 – 477,900 acres) and more acres recommended as wilderness (MA1b 214,800 acres) than any other alternative (see figure 4). About 59 percent would be allocated to general forest (MA6).



**Figure 4. Allocation by MA Group – Alternative C**

### Alternative C Relationship to Revision Topics

**Vegetation:** Movement towards desired future condition would be emphasized in MA6 (59 percent of the Forest) and would rely on a variety of management techniques (e.g., timber harvest, planting, thinning, natural unplanned ignitions, prescribed burns, and mechanical fuel treatment). MA1 and 5 (approximately 37 percent of the land allocation in this alternative) emphasize using natural ecological processes (e.g., plant succession) and disturbances (e.g., fire, insects, and diseases) as the primary forces affecting the vegetation. Management practices to restore vegetation on these MAs would include natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives and prescribed burns. Some mechanical treatments (e.g., timber harvest) may occur in backcountry areas. The amount of acres of ponderosa pine, western larch, and white pine

increase while Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine decrease. The amount of large/very large stands and lands managed for old growth increase over time.

**Fire:** This alternative emphasizes the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives and prescribed fire in all MAs except MA3, 4, and 7. Natural, unplanned ignitions and prescribed fire are important tools for moving vegetation towards desired condition and reducing fuel hazard, particularly in the backcountry (MA5). Hazardous fuels would continue to be reduced in the WUI.

**Watersheds, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Habitats/Species:** Improvements to watersheds, soil resources, riparian ecosystems, and aquatic habitats/species would continue to occur, although potentially slower than other alternatives, because of relatively more emphasis towards a passive restoration strategy, given the relatively larger amount of land area allocated in MA1 through MA5.

**Terrestrial Wildlife:** This alternative allocates 342,600 acres to MA1 and 477,900 acres to MA5 which would maintain areas of large undisturbed land and habitat for forest interior species. These MAs emphasize natural processes with minimal human intervention/disturbance, providing wildlife security habitat. There would potentially be less land available for active restoration of habitat for native species preferring open-canopied, large-tree forest conditions (MA6 – 59 percent of the Forest or 1,302,200 acres).

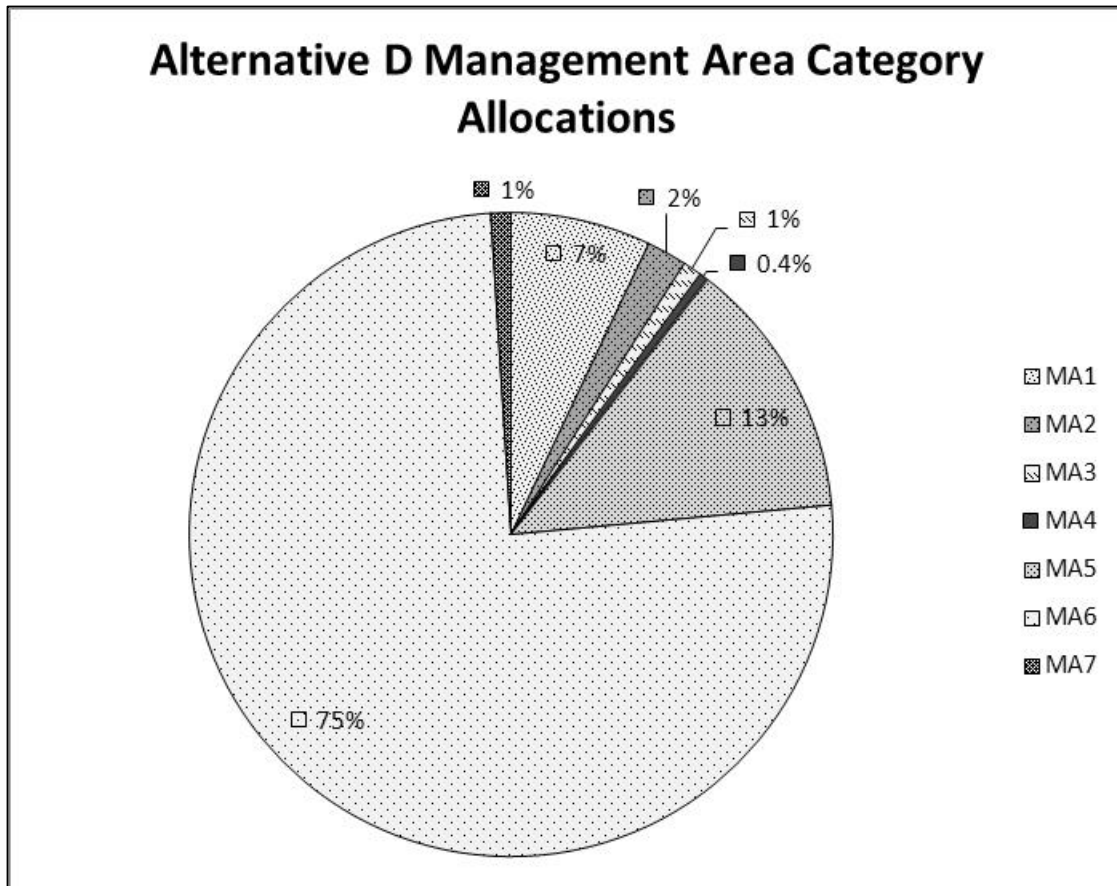
**Access and Recreation:** Motorized recreation opportunities on roads and trails would be determined by travel management decisions and displayed on MVUMs. Alternative C would provide the opportunity for motor vehicle use (may be allowed on roads and trails) on 67 percent of the NFS lands on the KNF. Over-snow vehicle use would be allowed on 82 percent and mechanized use (e.g., mountain bikes) on 86 percent of the Forest. Dispersed recreational opportunities would continue to be available with few improvements made to concentrated use areas.

**Recommended Wilderness:** This alternative recommends 217,300 acres for wilderness. This includes seven new wilderness areas (Allen Peak at 20,500 acres; Big Creek at 6,600 acres; Gold Hill West at 12,200 acres; Roderick at 23,500 acres; Saddle Mountain at 14,300 acres; Scotchman Peaks at 37,300 acres; and Whitefish Divide at 40,100 acres), an addition to Ten Lakes (9,100 acres) and an addition to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness (53,700 acres).

**Timber:** There are 753,800 acres (34 percent of the Forest) suited for timber production. The predicted volume sold for the first decade is 36.8 MMBF/year and the ASQ (unconstrained budget) is 75.9 MMBF/year.

### Alternative D

This alternative emphasizes achieving desired future conditions through mechanical means. Under this alternative, timber production is emphasized while moving towards desired vegetation conditions. This alternative has the most acres available for timber production and motorized access with 75 percent allocated to MA6 (general forest) (see figure 5). There would be fewer acres allocated to recommended wilderness (MA1b – less than 2 percent of the Forest) and backcountry (MA5 – less than 13 percent of the Forest).



**Figure 5. Allocation by MA Group – Alternative D**

### Alternative D Relationship to Revision Topics

**Vegetation:** Movement towards desired future condition would be emphasized in MA6 (75 percent of the Forest) and would rely on a variety of management techniques (e.g., timber harvest, planting, thinning, natural unplanned ignitions, prescribed burns, and mechanical fuel treatment). Timber management and production is emphasized while moving towards vegetation desired conditions. MA1 and 5 (approximately 20 percent of the land allocation in this alternative) emphasize using natural ecological processes (e.g., plant succession) and disturbances (e.g., fire, insects, and diseases) as the primary forces affecting the vegetation. Management practices to restore vegetation on these MAs would include natural, unplanned ignitions for resource benefit and prescribed burns. Some mechanical treatments (timber harvest) may occur in backcountry areas. The amount of acres of ponderosa pine, western larch, and white pine increase while Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine decrease. The amount of large/very large stands and lands managed for old growth increase over time.

**Fire:** Hazardous fuels would be reduced in the WUI and other areas where values are at risk. Fuels will be actively treated. Under this alternative, use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives and prescribed fire would be utilized in backcountry MAs while use of fire and timber harvest practices would be utilized on the rest of the Forest.

**Watersheds, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Habitats/Species:** Improvements to watersheds, soils, riparian, and aquatic habitats/species would continue to occur and there would be an emphasis in active restoration, given the relatively larger amount of land area allocated in MA6; however, the subsequent trend towards the desired condition could be offset by the potential impacts from the emphasis in timber management and timber production.

**Terrestrial Wildlife:** This alternative would have the greatest amount of land available for active restoration of those vegetative communities that are outside of desired conditions. It would also have the least emphasis on security habitat due to the greater emphasis on motorized use. Insects and disease would be actively controlled and prevented.

**Access and Recreation:** Motorized recreation opportunities on roads and trails would be determined by travel management decisions and displayed on MVUMs. Alternative D would provide the opportunity for motor vehicle use on 81 percent of the Forest. Over-snow vehicle use may be allowed (on roads and trails) on 90 percent of the Forest and mechanized use (e.g., mountain bikes) on 94 percent of the Forest. Existing developed recreation sites would be maintained. Dispersed recreation opportunities would continue to be available with some improvements made to concentrated use areas.

**Recommended Wilderness:** This alternative recommends 37,300 acres for wilderness as additions to the existing Cabinet Mountains Wilderness area (MA1a).

**Timber:** This alternative has the highest amount of timber production from suitable timberlands. There are 852,700 acres (38 percent of the Forest) suited for timber production. The predicted volume sold for the first decade is 50.5 MMBF/year and the ASQ (unconstrained budget) 98.7 MMBF/year.



## Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Study

Federal agencies are required by NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Public comments received in response to the Proposed Action provided suggestions for alternative methods for achieving the purpose and need. Some of these alternatives may have been outside the scope of this revision effort or duplicative of the alternatives considered in detail. Therefore, a number of alternatives were considered, but dismissed from detailed consideration for reasons summarized below. Public comments received on the DEIS and draft Forest Plan included some suggestions for additional alternatives. See the response to comments for additional information regarding alternatives considered and eliminated from detailed study.

### *The 1987 Forest Plan*

This alternative was considered as the IDT was developing a no-action alternative. This alternative is identical to Alternative A, which was described previously, except that the outputs would be those stipulated in the 1987 Plan. For example, the ASQ would be as shown on page II 4 of the 1987 Forest Plan.

This alternative was considered, but not analyzed in detail because it has been apparent since early monitoring and evaluation reports that the outputs projected in the 1987 Plan cannot be achieved. Alternative A provides a more realistic baseline for comparing current management to Alternatives B Modified, C, and D than would this alternative.

### *Forest “Restoration” Alternative*

This alternative responds to public comment to eliminate commercial extraction and uses (e.g., logging), eliminate commercial grazing, eliminate motorized use in IRAs and wilderness, eliminate off-road all-terrain vehicles (ATV) and over-snow motorized use, eliminate ASQ from inventoried roadless areas, and recommend all IRAs as wilderness.

The revision process for all alternatives recognizes the importance of functioning ecosystems. This was identified in the AMS. The revised Forest Plan direction includes desired conditions as well as standards and guidelines for each MA. Alternatives studied in detail look at varying degrees of allowing commercial timber harvest. In addition, appropriate use of timber harvest is needed in order to address a number of Need for Change topics (i.e., Vegetation, need to improve composition, structure, and landscape patterns; Timber, need to provide a reasonable level of goods and services; and Fire, need to provide strategies to affect the amount, arrangement, and types of hazardous fuels in the WUI).

National forests were established and are managed for a variety of multiple uses. No scientifically credible rationale was provided by the commenter’s requesting these actions as to why these resource uses should be discontinued, other than personal preference. Motorized use is already not permitted in congressionally designated Wilderness. The IDT developed alternatives that looked at providing a broad range of non-motorized use within roadless areas; many of the IRAs were designated to varying amounts to MA1b – recommended wilderness, or MA5 – backcountry allocations. Most of the inventoried roadless area lands would not be suitable for timber production under Alternatives B Modified and C, although timber harvest could still be used as a tool to meet management objectives in some areas. No information has been identified on the need to eliminate commercial grazing.

### *Conservation Alternative*

This alternative would place heavy emphasis on restoration of damaged lands and rivers and restoring declining fish and wildlife populations. It would also prohibit approval of new resource extraction or road building projects, unless the Forest Service establishes that it has adequate funding to monitor and/or maintain such projects throughout their lifetime. This alternative would give special emphasis to river health, including protection of riparian areas, wetlands, aquatic species, and water quality. This would include prohibiting any activities that would harm sensitive, threatened, or endangered aquatic species. This alternative would also require the Forest Service to take specific actions to improve water quality on water quality limited stream segments and to maintain good water quality where it already exists. This alternative would identify certain areas that should be targeted for special protection due to their ecological importance or their sensitivity. This alternative would include separate, more prescriptive standards for mining operations that protect streams, roadless areas, fish, wildlife, and other resource values. This alternative would place strict limits on the method and location of new road construction.

Many restoration activities are already occurring and are projected to continue to occur under any alternative (stream restoration, road decommissioning, and fuels treatment). Forestwide and MA direction emphasizes restoration, ecosystem resiliency, and improved watersheds trending toward desired ranges for vegetation composition, structure, patterns, and processes; incorporating climate change; and striving to maintain sustainable recreation and other uses across the Forest. The IDT felt that the conservation emphasis outlined in this proposed alternative were adequately addressed in Alternatives B, B Modified and C.

### *Wilderness/Roadless Related Alternatives*

All roadless areas determined to be capable and available for wilderness were considered by the IDT for inclusion as recommended wilderness. The Forest evaluated 43 IRAs for wilderness recommendation. The full set of capable and available areas represents the maximum potential for wilderness recommendations. The last step of the evaluation process is to determine if the area is needed as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The assessment focused on social and ecological factors. Social factors included current levels of use in designated wilderness in the Northern Region, national and local trends in outdoor activities, and population statistics. Ecological factors included the representation of vegetative cover types and ecological sections, fisheries, and wildlife.

The Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C) applies to inventoried roadless areas managed by the KNF, that are within the state of Idaho. This rule was issued in 2008 (73 FR 201). The Rule designated management direction for roadless areas in Idaho. This rule went through a separate public review and analysis process. The rule states “the prohibitions and permissions set forth in the rule are not subject to reconsideration, revision, or rescission in subsequent project decisions or land and resource management plans or revisions undertaken pursuant to 36 CFR 219” (36 CFR 294.28). Therefore, the rule provides higher level management direction for roadless areas in Idaho and limits the scope of changes made in this Forest Plan revision effort. The rule only provides management direction for road construction, reconstruction, timber cutting, and discretionary mineral development as these are the factors that have been found to substantially affect roadless character. Based on this higher level direction, all KNF alternatives were developed to conform to the management designations and direction in the Idaho Roadless Rule for those portions of inventoried roadless areas in Idaho.

This Plan is being developed under the 1982 planning procedures. The 1982 procedures require roadless areas to be evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential wilderness. The 1982 procedures require alternatives to be distributed between the minimum and maximum resource potential to reflect, to the extent practicable, the full range of major commodity and environmental resource uses and values that could be produced from the Forest. In order to meet this requirement, the EIS considers an alternative that would recommend more wilderness than the proposed action, as well as an alternative that recommends less.

### *Recommending Additional Roadless Areas for Wilderness*

Some people wanted additional roadless areas recommended as wilderness; however, they did not explicitly identify areas to consider. As noted above, the IDT evaluated each roadless area for its inherent capability and availability to be considered for wilderness. Based on this evaluation, thirteen roadless areas were rated as high in both capability and availability. These roadless areas were recommended for wilderness in Alternative C. Alternative C recommends nine areas as wilderness (242,800 acres) versus Alternative B Modified (the proposed action) which recommends four areas (105,300 acres). The IRAs not recommended for wilderness were primarily placed into either MA5 or MA3. These designations also limit activities such as road construction and timber cutting that could affect wilderness character.

### *Wild River Designation*

Some commenter's wanted to see wild river designation only for those rivers that lie within wilderness. Wild river designation is based on a rivers ability to provide certain attributes; not its overlap with MAs.

### *Additional Eligible Wild and Scenic River Designation*

Some commenters wanted to see eligible wild and scenic river designation for those rivers that had been inventoried and found to be eligible by a coalition in support of wild and scenic rivers. Their report (Colburn et al. 2011) describes an inventory they conducted and the resulting eligible wild and scenic rivers. A systematic inventory of named streams and rivers was completed by the KNF as part of the Forest Planning Process, as required by Forest Service Manual policy and the Wild and Scenic River Act. Documentation of this inventory and the resulting eligible wild and scenic rivers is documented in appendix E. To be eligible, a river must be free flowing and possess at least one outstandingly remarkable value that is rare, unique, or exemplary. A comparison was made between the inventories conducted by the KNF and the group's report. Although some of the rivers are the same, the coalition listed several additional rivers that were not designated as eligible wild and scenic rivers by the KNF. Although found to be eligible for wild and scenic rivers by the group, the following rivers are not included in any KNF action alternatives for the following reasons:

**Callahan Creek:** This creek was found by the group to have fisheries, geology, historic, recreation, and scenic values. The KNF recognized some of these same values, but the only rare, unique, or exemplary value was the historic value. The creek was allocated to a special area, MA3, because it is a historic mining and logging district that is eligible for the national register of historic places. MA3 would protect and manage these historic values.

**Granite Creek:** This creek was found by the group to have fisheries, recreation, and scenic values. The KNF recognized some of these same values, but they were not rare, unique, or exemplary. Under the action alternatives, a portion of this creek is within

designated wilderness, with the remainder in a mix of MA1b (recommended wilderness) or MA5b (backcountry motorized).

**Libby Creek:** This creek was found by the group to have fisheries and recreation values. The KNF found no outstandingly remarkable values for this creek. Therefore, this creek is not eligible as a wild and scenic river.

**Rock Creek:** This creek was found by the group to have fisheries values. The KNF found scenery, wildlife, and botanical values, but they were not rare, unique, or exemplary. This area was allocated to MA5b (backcountry motorized) and MA3.

**Ross Creek:** This creek was found by the group to have botanical, fisheries, recreational, and scenic values. The KNF found botanical values for the area. However, this creek runs dry in the late summer and would not be appropriate as an eligible wild and scenic river. Most of the area is allocated to MA1b (recommended wilderness), MA3 (special area), and MA4 (research natural area).

**Star Creek:** This creek was found by the group to have geologic and scenery values. The KNF found no outstandingly remarkable values for this creek. Therefore, this creek is not eligible as a wild and scenic river.

**Swamp Creek:** This creek was found by the group to have fisheries, recreation, and scenery values. The KNF found it is not free-flowing, but has a ditch bill diversion. Therefore, this creek is not eligible as a wild and scenic river.

**Wigwam River:** This River was found by the group to have fisheries, recreation, and scenery values. The KNF found it had a fisheries value for bull trout. Most of this river is in Canada. The fisheries value because of bull trout presence is protected through critical habitat designation. Therefore, this creek was not determined to be eligible as a wild and scenic river.

The number of additional creeks and rivers suggested for designation as eligible wild and scenic rivers supports the determination that these values are not rare, unique, or exemplary features. The KNF has many creeks and rivers that support many of these values. The same is true when looking at wild and scenic rivers regionally. Neighboring forests, such as the IPNF and the Flathead, have several rivers designated as eligible wild and scenic rivers, and numerous additional rivers requested by the public for consideration as eligible for wild and scenic river designation. The additional streams and rivers are not rare, unique, or exemplary when considered on a forest or a regional basis.

### ***KNF Managed as Roadless Area Complexes***

This alternative responds to public comment to identify and manage the Forest in roadless complexes. All roadless and unroaded areas would be free from road building, logging, and other development and resource extraction activities. This alternative was dropped from detailed study because it is similar to the alternatives considered in detail. Under Alternative C, almost all of the lands in IRAs would be managed to retain their roadless character because they would be allocated to MA1 (342,600 acres) or MA5 (477,900 acres). Under this alternative, only 6,100 acres of IRAs are allocated to MA6 general forest. Road construction and timber cutting would be permitted in these areas. These areas were allocated to general forest because of the need to provide vegetation management options to treat and reduce hazardous fuels and restore vegetation.

The comment also refers to managing unroaded areas as roadless. The analysis evaluated all lands with wilderness potential. Other “unroaded” parcels were addressed in the forestwide direction where they provided some pertinent resource protection. For example, some unroaded lands provide grizzly bear core habitat. Requirements for managing grizzly bear core habitat were made in the Forest Plan Amendments for Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (USDA Forest Service 2011 November (FSEIS and ROD)), and have been carried forward into all alternatives (FW-STD-WL-02). Other unroaded lands may provide secure areas for elk. The forestwide direction includes direction for increasing elk security (FW-OBJ-WL-02-Elk, FW-GDL-WL-10 Big game).

### *Reduction of Roadless Areas*

Many public comments were received asking for a reduction of inventoried roadless areas and opening them up to access and timber harvest. Managing for timber production requires intensive activity and roads. It is possible to manage for timber production without roads; however, the cost to thin, treat fuels, or commercially thin and harvest are high. When projects involve IRAs, the planning cost alone becomes prohibitive. Based on past actions and cost of implementation, it did not seem reasonable to consider an alternative to manage for timber production in IRAs. If an area is not allocated for suitable timber in IRAs, it does not mean commercial timber harvest will not take place. Harvest may be the best tool to accomplish fuels reduction, vegetation improvement, or some other management objective. If removal for commercial value is decided as the best means to meet the need for the project, after NEPA analysis at the project level, commercial harvest may take place. In addition, inventoried roadless areas (outside of Idaho) must follow the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B). Inventoried roadless areas within Idaho must follow the Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C). See FW-STD-IRA-01 and FW-STD-IRA-02. Therefore, this alternative was not analyzed in detail.

### *Open All Roadless Areas to Snowmobile Use*

Comments suggested that the Forest include an alternative that opened all roadless areas to snowmobile use. Approximately 87 percent of the lands (regardless of whether they are in an IRA or not) within the KNF allow over-snow vehicle use under Alternative B Modified, 82 percent under Alternative C, and 90 percent under Alternative D. All roadless areas outside MA1a (designated wilderness), MA1b (recommended wilderness), and MA4 (research natural areas) may be available for snowmobile use based on MA direction.

Other areas on the Forest are closed to over-snow vehicle use to provide non-motorized recreation opportunities. These areas provide opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation activities. Several other areas are closed to provide secure winter range for elk.

### *No Winter Motorized Recreation Alternative*

This alternative was proposed as a means to evaluate the impact of winter recreation on wildlife habitat, particularly grizzly bear or other resources. The request that easily-accessible, non-motorized, winter recreation areas are provided was addressed in Alternative C, with the emphasis on more recommended wilderness (MA1b) and winter non-motorized backcountry (MA5a). In addition, area closures for winter motorized use may occur where needed to protect wildlife and other resources under any of the alternatives.

### *Access and Roads*

This alternative responds to public comments to open all available roads for use and make all trails and roads available to multi-use recreationalists, with no designation to any one particular user group. It would take out all gates and leave roads open on a year-round basis. This increased access would provide additional recreational opportunities for the general public. Consideration of an alternative to open all available roads and trails for use would adversely impact resources by not protecting big game winter range and sensitive wildlife habitats. This alternative would not provide wildlife security and could adversely impact threatened and endangered species. It also would not provide any quiet recreation opportunities. Therefore, it is not considered reasonable and was not analyzed in detail. In addition, the ROD for the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Forest Plan Amendments for Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones USDA Forest Service, Kootenai, Lolo, and Idaho Panhandle National Forests (USDA Forest Service 2011 November (FSEIS 2011)) includes a set of motorized access and security guidelines to meet our responsibilities under the ESA to conserve and contribute to recovery of grizzly bears.

### *Pro-Motorized Recreation*

This alternative responds to public comments to address the demand for increased OHV and motorized recreation opportunities. The alternative includes access to existing routes and areas. It also includes an adequate quantity and quality of beginning, intermediate, and advanced routes and trails for a wide cross-section of motorized visitors including motorcycles, ATVs, and four-wheel drive vehicles, with a quantity and quality at least equal to non-motorized routes. To address concerns over noise levels from motorized vehicles, the Forest Plan would provide a reasonable decibel limit for exhaust systems.

As described in chapter 1 of the Forest Plan, the Forest Plan is a programmatic document that does not make site-specific decisions. The key indicators described under the access and recreation revision topic in chapter 1 of the FEIS do not include individual trails, roads, or miles, but only areas available for different uses. Travel management for designating roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use as required by 36 CFR 212 Subpart B has been completed on the KNF, although changes may be considered during site-specific planning at the project level. Roads, trails, and areas where motor vehicle use is allowed are identified on the KNF motor vehicle use map (MVUM).

In addition, this alternative would adversely impact resources by not protecting big game winter range and sensitive wildlife habitats. This alternative would not provide wildlife security and could adversely impact threatened and endangered species. Therefore, it is not considered reasonable and was not analyzed in detail. In addition, the ROD for the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Forest Plan Amendments for Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones USDA Forest Service, Kootenai, Lolo, and Idaho Panhandle National Forests (USDA Forest Service 2011 November (FSEIS 2011)) includes a set of motorized access and security guidelines to meet our responsibilities under the ESA to conserve and contribute to recovery of grizzly bears.

### *Site-Specific Travel Management*

Some public comments requested that individual roads or trails, or all unclassified routes, be evaluated and decisions be made concerning their use through the revision process. However, a road-by-road or trail-by-trail review requires more site-specific analysis than would be practical during forest plan revision. The programmatic-level planning of forest plan revision provides a

framework for integrated resource management and for guiding project and activity decision making. Site-specific travel analysis and subsequent project proposals, guided by the management direction established in the forest plan, is the appropriate level of planning to evaluate detailed travel management information such as the location, condition, and current uses of individual roads and trails.

The KNF has published motor vehicle use maps (MVUMs) that display those roads, trails, and areas designated for motor vehicle use by class of vehicle and time of year as required at 36 CFR Subpart B. The revised Forest Plan will identify where motorized recreation may or may not be compatible with management area direction, but will not change any specific motor vehicle use designations (excluding over-snow vehicle use). Ongoing district-level travel analyses and site-specific project planning will continue to evaluate road and trail designation opportunities as the MVUMs are reviewed and updated over the life of the Plan.

### *Small Sales only Alternative*

Some groups were in support of an alternative that would employ the small, local mill owners and employees. This alternative would look at no more clear-cutting but would instead focus on smaller timber sales, the logging of smaller trees, and the use of single tree selection management and no even-age management (i.e., clear-cutting). Clear-cutting is considered a desirable tool to create openings for a variety of ecological and social benefits on the Forest. Other considerations, such as support to local mills and employees, could be applied at the project level to different projects and nothing in the Plan would prohibit this.

### *Wildlife Linkage Alternative*

This alternative would respond to comments about habitat connectivity. Commenters requested the development of specific MAs for habitat linkages with their own set of goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines. In addition, commenters requested at least one Plan alternative be created to focus on maximizing habitat connectivity in the face of climate change.

Habitat connectivity was one of the major themes found throughout the wildlife analysis in the FEIS and wildlife specialist's report. Additionally, it was analyzed in the ERG report (ERG 2012). Connectivity is a topic that is woven throughout the wildlife direction in the revised Forest Plan, the wildlife specialist's report, and the "Wildlife" section of chapter 3 of the FEIS.

There was no need to have a separate MA designation for connectivity because of the direction present in the revised Forest Plan. The connectivity direction found in the "Forestwide and GA" sections applies regardless of MA. Additionally, there is MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that specifically states that certain MAs contribute to wildlife movement and security. Furthermore, the direction in the revised Forest Plan would be implemented by all action alternatives, which eliminates the need to have a separate "wildlife linkage" alternative. All of the action alternatives have a desired condition of facilitating movement between separated parcels of NFS lands and maintain options to address wildlife crossing concerns as they develop.

The Old Growth alternative described below addresses old growth habitat connectivity and vegetation management on national forest lands.

### *Natural Fires*

Some commenter's wanted to let all natural fires (unplanned ignitions) burn to return to a natural cycle. In the AMS, several impediments to the use of fire were identified in the 1987 Forest Plan

direction. The MAs were numerous and generally small in size. Adjoining MAs often had different or unclear direction on the use of fire and this resulted in creating a difficult situation for developing subsequent fire management plans and implementing an integrated fire management program. Also, because the 1987 Forest Plan did not contain an emphasis or much analysis on the use of natural, unplanned ignitions, it was generally believed that the Plan did not adequately authorize the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions is allowed and promoted under all action alternatives. However, the Forest is unable to let all unplanned ignitions burn because of concerns with such things as private property, structures, facilities, and rare and unique habitats.

### *Old Growth Reserves, Linkages between Reserves, and Differing Management Direction for Old Growth Management*

Some commenters suggested the designation of old growth reserves and linkages between reserves. Under this alternative, areas designated as old growth reserves would be assessed for restoration needs that would move them toward a desired condition. At the same time, the non-reserve areas would be assessed for active timber management. Projects would proceed only after a comprehensive inventory process was completed that identified (mapped) all old growth and mature/late-successional forest for each “Old Growth Management Unit” wholly or partially encompassed within the project area. This updated inventory would form the basis for the process to set-aside (commit to protecting) the old growth and mature/late-successional forests.

The concept of creating old growth reserves was considered but the Forest determined not to carry this suggestion forward for a number of reasons. The scale of “Old Growth Management Units” (approximately 10,000 acres) is too small to ensure that old growth is distributed across the Forest in a “natural” way that would support old growth associated species. Historically, stand-replacing fires have been larger than the size of Old Growth Management Units, having the potential to kill all existing stands of old growth in a unit. In addition, some areas of the Forest have had more old growth than others historically, due to variations in climate, topography, and other factors that influence fire return intervals and severities. Thus, the use of Old Growth Management Units would not capture the natural distribution of old growth on the landscape.

The action alternatives provide for protection and enhancement of old growth stands (see the “Vegetation” section of chapter 3 of this FEIS). Revised Forest Plan desired conditions provide for increases in the amount of lands managed for old growth while standards provide protection of stands that are currently old growth.

In addition, some people suggested that the Forest manage for a certain percentage of old growth, by watershed and elevation, and to prohibit new roads in old growth habitat. The action alternatives provide for increased amounts of old growth and protection of current old growth. In addition, MA allocations provide for large areas of little or no active vegetation management (i.e., MA1 and 5). The revised Forest Plan also includes a guideline that road construction or other developments should generally be avoided in existing old growth stands. Thus, these concerns have been incorporated into the action alternatives.

### *Varying/Additional Standards and Guidelines*

Alternatives were suggested that would add additional guidelines or standards proposed in the Plan, or vary the levels of protection offered from the current ones by alternative. The requests included the following, among others:



### Proposed Standards

- **Maximum road density of 1.5 miles/section** – Road densities standards were included in the 1987 Plan as a way to provide secure habitat for big game and other species, such as grizzly bears. The Forest Plan Amendments for Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (USDA Forest Service 2011 November (FSEIS and ROD)), which is incorporated into the Plan for all alternatives, addresses the habitat requirements for grizzly bears. This decision established standards for total motorized open routes, which is similar to the concept of road densities. The action alternatives include management direction for elk by requiring a certain level of elk security in lieu of road densities. In addition, the alternatives incorporate different amounts of each MA. Alternative C allocates the most areas to recommended wilderness and backcountry, which provides lower road densities than the general forest areas.
- **No net gain in ATV or snowmobile access over the next 15 years** – This is considered indirectly through the alternatives. Alternative C essentially would result in no net increase in off-highway vehicle or snowmobile access over what currently exists.

### Proposed Guidelines

- **More restrictive grazing** – Grazing is very limited on the KNF. Based on the AMS and the analysis, the IDT did not find any reason to restrict grazing nor was there any specific reasoning given by the commenter.
- **Permit motorized use in recommended wilderness** – Motorized use is a non-conforming use in wilderness; therefore, the alternatives do not permit motorized use in recommended wilderness so that the use does not become established. Instead, the alternatives included varying amounts of recommended wilderness to address this concern.
- **Stricter guidelines for watersheds/aquatics, access and recreation (seasonal closures, road and landing locations in riparian conservation areas, sediment transport, decommissioning)** – The alternatives incorporate management direction for watershed/aquatics. Based on the analysis, additional protective measures were not found to be warranted.

### *Conformance with the Resource Planning Act (RPA)*

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) regulations require development of at least one alternative which incorporates the Resource Planning Act (RPA) Program's tentative objectives for each national forest (36 CFR 219.12(f)(6)). The last RPA Program was developed in 1995. The Forest Service Strategic Plan 2007-2012, in lieu of an RPA Program, was completed in accordance with the Government Performance Results Act and the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The Strategic Plan does not recommend outputs to incorporate in specific forest plans, but all alternatives analyzed in detail in this FEIS incorporate the broad strategic objectives.

### Comparison of Alternatives

This section provides a summary of the land allocations and effects of implementing each alternative. Table 5 provides a comparison of management area allocations by alternative. Alternative A, the no-action alternative, is included even though it does not use the management

areas shown in the revised Forest Plan. Where possible, Alternative A was crosswalked to the revised Forest Plan MAs for comparison purposes.

Table 6 summarizes the effects by alternative for each revision topic. Information in this table is focused on activities and effects where different levels of effects or outputs can be distinguished quantitatively or qualitatively between alternatives.

**Table 5. Comparisons of Alternatives by Management Area Allocation, Acres\*, and Percent**

MA	Alternative A		Alternative B Modified		Alternative C		Alternative D	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
1a	93,500	4.2%	93,700	4.2%	93,700	4.2%	93,700	4.2%
1b	76,500	3.4%	102,700	4.6%	214,800	9.7%	36,100	1.6%
1c	34,100	1.5%	34,100	1.5%	34,100	1.5%	34,100	1.5%
2	n/a	n/a	38,300	1.7%	45,100	2.0%	50,200	2.3%
3	15,900	0.1%	31,400	1.4%	30,500	1.4%	31,700	1.4%
4	-- <sup>1</sup>	--	9,800	0.4%	8,400	0.4%	8,400	0.4%
5a	343,800	15.5%	231,100	10.4%	336,700	15.2%	112,600	5.1%
5b	-- <sup>2</sup>	--	169,800	7.7%	121,200	5.5%	47,900	2.2%
5c	n/a	n/a	86,500	3.9%	20,000	0.9%	117,500	5.3%
6	n/a	n/a	1,408,800	63.5%	1,302,200	58.7%	1,674,500	75.5%
7	n/a	n/a	12,900	0.6%	12,400	0.6%	12,400	0.6%
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>563,800</b>		<b>2,219,100</b>		<b>2,219,100</b>		<b>2,219,100</b>	

\* Acres are based on a single management area designation; where management areas overlap, the following hierarchy was used: MA1a, MA4, MA1b, MA1c, MA2, MA3, and MA7

<sup>1</sup> For Alternative A, MA3 and 4 are a combined total, from MA21 in 1987 Plan

<sup>2</sup> For Alternative A, MA5a and 5b are a combined total from MAs 2, 3, and 29 in the 1987 Plan

**Table 6. Comparison of Resource Key Indicators by Alternatives**

Resource and indicator(s)	Alternative			
	A	B Modified	C	D
<b>Vegetation</b>				
Forest composition	Least improvement	Greatest improvement	Second greatest improvement	Third greatest improvement
Forest structure	Least improvement	Greatest improvement	Second greatest improvement	Third greatest improvement
Landscape pattern	Least improvement	Greatest improvement	Second greatest improvement	Third greatest improvement
Susceptibility and resiliency to key disturbances	Least improvement	Greatest improvement	Second greatest improvement	Third greatest improvement
Carbon Sequestration	Greatest amount of carbon sequestered	Third highest amount of carbon sequestered	Second highest amount of carbon sequestered	Least amount of carbon sequestered
<b>Fire</b>				
Use of fire (prescribed and natural, unplanned ignitions)	Lowest emphasis	Second most emphasis	Most emphasis	Third most emphasis
Fuel treatment/risk reduction	Lowest emphasis	Most emphasis	Third most emphasis	Second most emphasis
<b>Watersheds, Soils, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat/Species</b>				
Trend in watershed condition, water quality, soil productivity, riparian ecosystem function, and quality of aquatic habitats	Overall improvements, based on current and historical accomplishments in restoration efforts and activities	More rapid improvement than C or D. Vegetation restoration emphasis, would likely target areas that include other active restoration opportunities for soil and aquatic resources and also includes a balance with passive	Potentially slower improvement, because of emphasis towards "passive restoration" with amount of land area allocated within MA1 – MA5.	Although more land allocated to MA6, compared to other alternatives, potentially slower improvement with the emphasis in commodity based management which could offset effects of active and passive restoration efforts

Resource and indicator(s)	Alternative			
	A	B Modified	C	D
		restoration opportunities		
<b>Terrestrial Wildlife</b>				
Changes in forest composition, structure, and pattern	See Vegetation section above	See Vegetation section above	See Vegetation section above	See Vegetation section above
Acres of security habitat	Third most acres of security habitat	Second most acres of security habitat	Most acres of security habitat	Least acres of security habitat
<b>Access and Recreation</b>				
Percent of the Forest where roads & trails may be designated for motor vehicle use	76 percent	74 percent	67 percent	81 percent
Percent of the Forest where over-snow vehicle use is allowed	88 percent	87 percent	82 percent	90 percent
Percent of the Forest where over-snow vehicle use is consistent with desired condition	N/A	77 percent	68 percent	84 percent
Percent of the Forest where mechanized use is allowed	96 percent	91 percent	86 percent	94 percent
Percent of Forest by Scenic Integrity Objectives Category(ies)	11 percent	12.9 percent	17.5 percent	9.6 percent
Very High	31 percent	0.1 percent	0.1 percent	0.1 percent
High		23.9 percent	23.9 percent	15.1 percent
High/Moderate	47 percent	0.7 percent	0.7 percent	0.7 percent
Moderate	11 percent	0 percent <sup>3</sup>	0 percent	0 percent
Moderate/Low		62.4 percent	57.8 percent	74.5 percent
High to Low				
Percent of Forest by ROS Class				
<u>Summer ROS:</u>				
Primitive	10 percent <sup>2</sup>	8 percent	9 percent	8 percent
Semi-Primitive Non-motorized	57 percent	54 percent	56 percent	58 percent
Semi-Primitive Motorized	10 percent	16 percent	16 percent	12 percent
Roaded Natural/Rural	23 percent	22 percent	22 percent	22 percent
<u>Winter ROS:</u>				

Resource and indicator(s)	Alternative			
	A	B Modified	C	D
Primitive Semi-Primitive Non-motorized Semi-Primitive Motorized Roaded Natural/Rural	<1 percent 5 percent 87 percent 8 percent	<1 percent 14 percent 78 percent 8 percent	<1 percent 24 percent 68 percent 8 percent	<1 percent 7 percent 85 percent 8 percent
<b>Recommended Wilderness</b>				
Acres of recommended wilderness (includes overlapping management areas)	102,500 acres	105,300 acres	242,800 acres	37,300 acres
<b>Timber</b>				
Tentatively Suitable for Timber Production	1,711,800 acres	1,711,800 acres	1,711,800 acres	1,711,800 acres
Other resources limit timber or management precludes timber production as an objective	972,500 acres	918,100 acres	958,000 acres	859,100 acres
Number of suitable acres available for timber production	739,300 acres	793,700 acres	753,800 acres	852,700 acres
Percent Suitable	33 percent	36 percent	34 percent	38 percent
Predicted Volume Sold	50.5 MMBF	47.5 MMBF	36.8 MMBF	50.5 MMBF
Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) Long-term Sustained Yield	87.5 MMBF 15.7 MMCF	80.2 MMBF 17.0 MMCF	75.9 MMBF 16.3 MMCF	98.7 MMBF 18.1 MMCF

<sup>1</sup> Alternative A (No-action – Existing Forest Plan) does not have scenic integrity objectives established using the scenery management system. In 1987 when the original Plan was completed scenery was described using the Visual Management System (Agriculture Handbook Number 462) with areas of the forest classified using Visual Quality Objectives

<sup>2</sup> Alternative A does not have ROS classes, but general categories by Management Area

<sup>3</sup> Turner Mountain Ski Area (MA7) is the only area that has this Scenic Integrity Objective Classification (Moderate/Low) and totals 852 acres

## Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

### Introduction and Organization of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 summarizes the physical, biological, social, and economic environments that may be affected by the alternatives presented in chapter 2. It also presents the effects that the alternatives may have on those resources. The discussion of affected environment and environmental consequences was combined into one chapter to provide a clear picture of what the resources are, and what could happen to them under the different alternatives. The analysis of environmental consequences provides the basis for the comparison of alternatives that appears at the end of chapter 2, table 6. This introduction provides the context in which the alternatives are analyzed.

#### *Relationship between Programmatic and Site-Specific Analysis*

This final EIS is a programmatic document. It discloses the environmental consequences on a large scale, at the planning level. This is in contrast to analyses for site-specific projects. The final EIS presents a programmatic action at a forest level of analysis but does not predict what will happen each time the standards and guidelines are implemented. Environmental consequences for individual, site-specific projects on the Forest are not described. The environmental effects of individual projects will depend on the implementation of each project, the environmental conditions at each project location, and the application of the standards and guidelines in each case.

The affected environment and environmental consequences discussions in this chapter allow a reasonable prediction of consequences for any individual location on the Forest. However, this document does not describe every environmental process or condition.

#### *Budget Levels*

The Forest's budget directly affects the level of activities and outputs that may occur as a result of forest plan implementation. Budgets are expected to remain flat or decrease in the future. The effects of all alternatives were analyzed using current budget levels. To analyze effects without consideration of expected budgets would be a misrepresentation of expected outcomes. The exception is the vegetation and timber resource sections. To display movement towards vegetation desired conditions and to develop the ASQ, an unconstrained budget level was analyzed along with the constrained, current budget level.

#### *Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences Section*

The remainder of chapter 3 is organized by resource, focusing on those resources related to issues described in chapter 1. Following the overview of the KNF, the chapter is divided into four major sections:

- Physical and Biological Elements
- Uses and Designations of the Forest
- Production of Natural Resources
- Economic and Social Environment

Each resource section is further divided into the following sub-sections:

- Introduction
- Legal and Administrative Framework
- Analysis Area
- Analysis Methods and Assumptions
- Key Indicators
- Changes Between Draft and Final (where applicable)
- Affected Environment
- Environmental Consequences (direct, indirect, and cumulative effects)

## *Overview of the KNF*

### Physical and Biological Environment

In order to provide a better understanding of the ecological setting and importance of the KNF, one must first look at where the Forest is in relation to a larger landscape.

The KNF is set within the Northern Rocky Mountain Steppe-Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow Province and includes two ecological subsections, the Flathead Valley and Northern Rockies section, both of which are influenced by inland maritime and continental weather patterns.

The KNF falls within various hierarchical land units such as the Northern Rocky Mountain Ecological Province, the Canadian Rocky Mountains Ecoregion, the Upper Columbia River Basin, and the Kootenai River Basin. Recent broad scale assessments, such as the ICBEMP, have been completed for each of these land units, which have included all or portions of the Forest. In addition, assessments have been completed or are ongoing for large portions of the Forest (upper Kootenai Sub-basin Assessment on the KNF). These broad-scale assessments were reviewed and the resulting information incorporated into this analysis.

Ranges of high craggy peaks mark the Forest with Snowshoe Peak in the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness at 8,738 feet, the highest point. The Whitefish Range, Purcell Mountains, Bitterroot Range, Salish Mountains, and Cabinet Mountains are all part of the rugged terrain radiating from the river valleys. In the north central part of the Forest, the land is more open with gently rolling timbered hills lying in the shadows of the Whitefish Range. Topography, aspect, and elevation serve to modify local climate in a very complex fashion. The climate of the KNF has been described as "modified pacific maritime" in character, meaning that compared to the remainder of Montana, this area's climate resembles that found along the Pacific coast. The character becomes "modified" by occasional intrusions of the arctic air masses, more commonly found in the remainder of the state, which can bring winter temperatures down to -30° F with heavy snowfalls in the mountains. Average annual temperatures of 45° F reflect the moderating influence of the pacific air masses. Summer temperatures are moderate with few days reaching over the 90° mark. The wet season in the Forest usually occurs in the fall and early winter.

The Forest is dominated by two major rivers, the Kootenai and the Clark Fork, along with several smaller rivers and their tributaries. Two hydroelectric dams on the Clark Fork have created the Cabinet Gorge and Noxon reservoirs within the Forest boundary. State Highway 200 parallels these reservoirs as it crosses the Forest. The Kootenai River is spanned by another hydroelectric (and flood-control) project, Libby Dam. This structure located about 18 miles upstream from Libby, Montana, has created Lake Koocanusa, a 90-mile-long reservoir reaching



northward into the Canadian Rockies. Lake Koocanusa is almost totally surrounded by national forest lands...no private summer home or condominium developments here. State Highway 37 follows the east shore to Rexford and beyond to Eureka, Montana. The elevation of the Kootenai River as it leaves the Forest and the state is 1,862 feet, the lowest point in Montana.

The Yaak, Fisher, Tobacco, and Vermillion Rivers are smaller rivers within the confines of the Forest. There are over 100 lakes inside the boundaries of the KNF ranging from small alpine lakes to 1,240-acre McGregor Lake.

Severe winters are uncommon; temperatures can range from below 0 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter to above 100 degrees in the summer. Precipitation averages 20 to 40 inches annually, but can attain over 80 inches within some GAs. Most of the region has been glaciated with landforms typical of this process.

Mixed evergreen-deciduous forest predominates with Douglas-fir, larch, and cedar-hemlock as common forest types.

Soils are mostly cool, moist Inceptisols with a variety of igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks forming the mountain masses.

Large mammals in this province include grizzly and black bear, caribou, deer, moose, elk, mountain goat, mountain lion, and bobcat. Smaller mammals include red squirrel, flying squirrel, marten, fisher, redtailed chipmunk, picas, hoary marmots, and bushytail woodrat. Birds found most often are eagles, hawks, grouse, turkeys, chickadees, nuthatches, thrushes, and bluebirds. Fish include bull trout, landlocked salmon, sturgeon, rainbow trout, brook trout, and cutthroat trout.

### Ecological Sustainability

Many of the decisions to be made in the Forest Plan will affect the Forest's contribution to ecological sustainability. Goals, desired future conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, MA allocations, and monitoring will all have effects to the components of ecological sustainability.

Over the last half-century, scientists and natural resource managers have learned much about how ecosystems contribute to the fulfillment of human life (Costanza et al. 1997). An ecosystem is an interacting system of living organisms and their environment. Most obviously, ecosystems provide many of the goods that are harvested and traded in the human economy – food, timber, forage, biomass fuels, and many pharmaceuticals (Daily 1997). Ecosystems also provide indirect benefits to humans through their impacts on nutrient flux and cycling, mitigation of flood and drought, and maintenance of biodiversity, all of which feedback in important ways on the production of ecosystem goods that humans directly derive from ecosystems (Chapin et al. 1996). Finally, ecosystems also provide less tangible, but equally important, benefits in the form of recreational, spiritual, and intellectual stimulation (Postel and Carpenter 1997). Because of these important and necessary goods and benefits provided to humans, the long-term sustainability of ecosystems is central to natural resource management.

Ecological sustainability is defined as: “The ability to maintain diversity, productivity, resilience to stress, health, and yields of desired values, resource uses, products, or services over time in an ecosystem while maintaining its integrity” (USDA Forest Service 1995a). Integrity, in turn, is defined as: “...the capacity to support and maintain a balanced, integrated, and adaptive biological system having the full range of elements and processes expected in a region's natural

habitat” (Karr 1991). Critical elements of integrity include vegetation measures of structure, composition, and process and they are defined as:

- Structure – the horizontal and vertical physical elements of forests and grasslands and the spatial interrelationships of ecosystems.
- Composition – the component tree, shrub, grass, and forb classes in a stand or community.
- Function – includes energy flows of materials across and within the landscape and how one ecosystem influences another. Function also relates to energy processes such as fire, hydrological processes (including floods), and matter and energy exchange throughout the food chain.

A system subject to external disturbance will retain its integrity if it preserves all its components as well as the functional relationships among the components (De Leo and Levin 1997).

Based on Haynes et al. 2001, a working definition of aquatic sustainability can be described as the inherent capability or existing potential for a watershed system to provide water quality, water bodies (streams, lakes, wetlands, ponds, etc.), riparian environs (wetlands, flood plains, stream banks, lake shores, and other lands including terrestrial lands proximal to water bodies that can directly influence the water), and the biologic organisms that live in or are dependent on the water that are necessary to support the beneficial uses of the water.

Ecosystem diversity is the variety of ecological structures, communities, and processes across spatial scales such as regions, sub-regions, landscapes, and localities. Ecosystem diversity arises from variation in abiotic and biotic components and ecological processes over space and time (Huston 1994). History plays a strong role in the ecosystems we see today through the long-term effects of geological and climate change and biological evolution, and the shorter-term effects of weather, disturbance, succession, and migration of organisms. Ecosystems are open, linked, and adaptive systems. Linkages among ecosystem components can be weak or strong and the system’s responses to change in one component can be spatially and temporally lagged (Wu and Loucks 1995).

## Social and Economic Environment

Issues related to socio-economic resources are analyzed in detail in this chapter. These resources include Recreation, Access, Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Special Areas, Timber, Livestock Grazing, Minerals, and Tribal Rights and Interests. The chapter includes an analysis on the social and economic effects of these resources on the planning area. As part of Forest Plan revision, an assessment was completed on the conditions and trends of the social and economic setting for the KNF (Russell et al. 2006). Following are excerpts from this document, giving a general description of the historical and socio-economic setting for the KNF.

### *Historical Setting*

The social and economic environment for the KNF incorporates a geographic region including northwestern Montana and portions of the panhandle region of northern Idaho. The Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia are across the international border with Idaho and Montana. The states and provinces of this region are the historical homeland for Native American tribes including the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. These tribes relied on the natural resources of these lands, including camas roots, salmon, elk, deer, and other fish, game, and plant material. After the acquisition of horses, some also trekked across the mountains

to hunt buffalo. A lifestyle tied to following the natural cycles of resource production and availability characterized these tribes before contact with Europeans and Americans.

Fur traders and explorers, including David Thompson and others of the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company, were among the first to make this contact. By 1809 David Thompson had established Kullyspell (Kalispell) House on Lake Pend d'Oreille. Other fur traders of the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company were followed by Christian missionaries including the Jesuit Priest Father Peter DeSmet who established one of the first missions in what was to become northern Idaho. In 1805-1806, as Lewis and Clark descended from Lolo Pass, they were greeted by members of the Nez Perce Tribe. Tribal members assisted them with horses, food, and travel through their territory. Lewis and Clark took back to the east stories about the resources of this region, stimulating further exploration and a trickle of new settlers who were seeking to use and develop the resources of the region.

Gold was found along Libby Creek in northwestern Montana about 1860. Around this same time (1863) gold was discovered in British Columbia attracting miners who traveled along the Wild Horse trail and across the Kootenai River, aided by Bonner's ferry. The discovery of gold, silver, zinc, and other metals south of the Canadian border attracted a new influx of miners, cattlemen, farmers, and entrepreneurs into this region. Mining flourished in the communities of Libby and Troy. Development of the region was further fueled by construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad and Great Northern Railroad during the 1880s and 1890s. During this same time period (1890) Forest Reserves were created in this part of Idaho and Montana and these eventually became NFS lands.

The open spaces, rich natural resources, and scenic beauty aided by the Homestead Act of 1909 continued to fuel growth in the region. Once the railroad provided adequate transportation, timber resources also became an important source of economic and population growth. White pine, fir, and other timber resources attracted lumber interests from the east that established mills and company towns such as Libby in Montana. The first farmers arrived in the region around 1869 growing flax and other grains. These first farmers provided the food resources for the mill towns, miners, and shop keepers who were essential to the development of the entire region.

The history of this region is steeped in logging, mining, agriculture, and the railroad connecting the east to the west. These railroads were essential to enabling development of the region's resources. The present day socioeconomic environment of the project area has a foundation in this history of natural resource development and settlement driven by the economics and lifestyle issues of western exploration that was supported by the federal government policies such as the Homestead Act.

### *Social Setting*

National forests are public lands that influence and are influenced by the local and national public. The local public is represented in the communities of place and interest adjacent to national forest lands. Many of these communities were formed from the development of timber, gold, silver, grazing lands, and other natural resources. Historically, individuals in these communities developed strong place attachments to public lands that provided recreational, aesthetic, employment, and other contributions to their social environment. Work, place, and lifestyles became an integral part of the culture and social characteristics of such communities. These communities developed particular interests in the interactions of public lands with their ways of life and their economic present and future. These interests are expressed in their interactions with public lands in addition to the actions and comments of local interest groups.

The KNF contains portions of five counties in two states: Flathead, Lincoln, and Sanders counties in Montana and Bonner and Boundary counties in Idaho. These counties comprise the analysis area for the social and economic environment. These are the counties that are likely to be affected by KNF management. These counties are also influenced by a larger regional economy comprised of the surrounding counties.

Within this larger region, several different categories of communities can be identified by characteristics such as population size, patterns of residence, and lifestyles. Spokane (population of 471,000 persons) and Missoula (60,722) are *regional centers* with larger populations, more dense urban-like residence patterns, and access to airports that connect to larger transportation hubs. Similarly, Spokane and Missoula also offer access to diverse specialty services as well as diverse shopping and amenities. A second community grouping is the *regional hub* that provides services, shopping, amenities, and employment opportunities for residents of nearby smaller communities and rural residents, although not the diversity of services and amenities offered in the regional centers. These communities are the next largest in population size and they also have urban-like residence patterns and population densities. Regional hub communities include Kalispell (16,391), Sandpoint (7,378), Coeur d'Alene (37,262), Moscow (21,707), and, Lewiston (30,937). *Rural centers* are the third community category. Rural centers may be a county seat or other incorporated entity offering basic services and amenities for nearby smaller communities and rural residents. Places such as Libby (2,606), Thompson Falls (1,323), St. Maries (2,589), Kellogg (2,236), and Bonner's Ferry (2,647) exemplify these rural centers. *Rural towns* provide limited services and amenities, but they foster a sense of local identity and community among those living in their vicinity. These rural towns are exemplified in communities such as Troy (957) and Eureka (1,017) in Lincoln County, Plains (1,126) in Sanders County, Moyie Springs (685) in Boundary County, and Clark Fork (566) and Priest River (1,863) in Bonner County.

Traditionally, the county communities relied on the use of natural resources in activities such as farming, ranching, mining, and timber production. Recreation has also been an important use of forest resources among the residents of nearby communities as well as others from more distant urban areas such as Spokane, Missoula, and elsewhere. Recreation usage also appears to be increasing as urban populations increase and more diverse residents are moving to rural towns and cities. The institution of the Forest Service has also been a part of the social environment of communities in this region since development of the NFS.

## Physical and Biological

This section includes the following resources:

- Vegetation
- Rare Plants
- Non-native Invasive Plants
- Fire and Fuels Management
- Watershed, Soils, Riparian, Aquatic Habitat, and Aquatic Species
- Terrestrial Wildlife
- Air Quality

Vegetation is listed first as it is often referred to in several of the following sections.

## *Forest Vegetation*

### **Introduction**

The ecosystems and vegetation of the KNF are dynamic. The processes of succession and disturbance patterns have produced the current vegetative conditions. These natural processes, both part of and necessary for ecosystem function, will continue to produce changes in the future. Therefore, the following descriptions of current vegetation represent only one point in time. Some of the changes will be generally predictable, others less so. Accordingly, any description of future vegetation is a prediction subject to uncertainty. The level of uncertainty depends on the degree to which natural processes are allowed to operate. Natural disturbance events such as fire, windstorms, landslides, and insect and disease outbreaks are generally difficult to predict. On the other hand, changes associated with succession and human-caused disturbance such as timber harvest and prescribed burning are fairly predictable. Although the Forest will experience natural disturbance events, the degree to which they are allowed to occur will influence the ability to predict future vegetative conditions at any given point in time.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **The Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974:** Provides for maintenance of land productivity and the need to protect and improve the soil and water resources.
- **The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976:** “It is the policy of the Congress that all forested lands in the NFS shall be maintained in appropriate forest cover with species of trees, degree of stocking, rate of growth, and conditions of stand designed to secure the maximum benefits of multiple use sustained yields. Plans developed shall provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet the overall multiple-use objectives, and within the multiple-use objective.”
- **Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974:** Authorizes the Secretary to cooperate with other federal and state agencies and individuals in carrying out measures to eradicate, suppress, control, or prevent the spread of noxious weeds.
- **The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973:** Requires federal agencies to conserve threatened and endangered species.
- **Executive Order 13112:** Directs federal agencies whose actions may affect the status of invasive species to (1) prevent the introduction of invasive species, (2) detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species in a cost effective and environmentally sound manner, as appropriations allow.

#### *Regulation and Policy*

- **FSM 2080:** Contains numerous provisions related to suppression of noxious weeds.
- **FSM 4063:** Directs management of Research Natural Areas as part of a national network of ecological areas allocated in perpetuity for research and education and/or to maintain biological diversity on NFS lands.
- **FSM 4063.03:** Forest Plans shall include analysis of, and recommendations for, any proposed research natural areas establishment.

- **FSM 2670.22:** (1) Develop and implement management practices to ensure that species do not become threatened or endangered because of Forest Service actions; (2) maintain viable populations of all native and desired non-native wildlife, fish, and plant species in habitats distributed throughout their geographic range on NFS lands; (3) Develop and implement management objectives for populations and or habitats of sensitive species.
- **Departmental Regulation 9500-4:** Habitats for all native and desired non-native plants, fish, and wildlife species will be managed to maintain at least viable populations of such species. In achieving this objective, habitat must be provided for the number and distribution of reproductive individuals to ensure continued existence of a species throughout its geographic range.
- **Region 1 Natural Areas Assessment 1996:** Provided an assessment of plant community types needed to fulfill the national spectrum of types to be placed in RNA status in Region 1.
- **USDA Forest Service Position Statement on National Forest Old-Growth Values 10/11/89:** Recognizes the many values associated with old growth forests, such as biological diversity, wildlife and fisheries habitat, recreation, aesthetics, soil productivity, water quality, and industrial raw material. Old growth on the national forests will be managed to provide the foregoing values for present and future generations. Decisions on managing existing old growth forest to provide these values will be made in the development and implementation of forest plans. These plans shall also provide for a succession of young forests into old growth forests in light of their depletion due to natural events or harvest.

### Key Indicators

- Forest composition and structure – predicted changes to tree species composition and structure (tree size classes, old growth, and snags);
- Landscape pattern of the forest – potential changes to the patterns of forest conditions (e.g., successional stages, species composition, tree density, and fuels) on the landscape;
- Resistance and resiliency of the forest vegetation to disturbances and stressors – effects of the alternatives on the hazard of wildfire, key insects, and diseases, weather disturbances, and climate change; and
- Carbon sequestration.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

The vegetative management approach that is being used in the Forest Plan is one of providing ecological components, patterns, and processes at multiple scales on the landscape, and thereby providing the full spectrum of habitats and conditions needed for all of the biological organisms associated with the various ecosystems. This general strategy is often called the “coarse-filter” approach to ecosystem management and is followed by a fine-filter approach that focuses on more species-specific management strategies (see AMS Technical Report (USDA Forest Service 2003 March)) for more detailed information). In order to preserve species, their populations, genetic structure, biotic communities, and landscapes, there has been an increased emphasis on the maintenance of ecological functions, processes, and disturbance regimes (West and Whitford 1995).

As a way to understand the various ecosystems on the Forest and sustain the biodiversity within them, it is necessary to have some reference for understanding the potential productivity of the land, the natural diversity of the relevant ecosystems, and what processes sustain this productivity and diversity. The concept of ecosystem ranges of variability has been suggested as a framework for coarse filter analysis (Landres et al. 1999). Historic range of variability concepts

were developed in part to better understand how disturbance, vegetation, and other ecosystem components interact, and in turn how interaction affects biophysical characteristics such as plants, animals, fish, and soil and water resources. Historical perspectives increase our understanding of the dynamic nature of landscapes and provide a frame of reference for assessing current patterns and processes (Swetnam et al. 1999).

The HRV analysis focuses on forest composition, structure, landscape pattern, and processes (disturbance and succession). Not only was the HRV considered in revising forest plan direction, but the potential impacts that climate change might have on the future range of variability was contemplated. The concept of comparing current vegetation conditions to both the historical as well as the potential future conditions is described by Gärtner et al. (2008). In summary, this approach is designed to provide insights into how ecosystems have changed, as well as how they may change in the future. The knowledge gained from this approach can then be used to “inform” management decisions regarding how climate change may affect future landscape conditions (Keane et al. 2008). Given these insights, climate change adaptive strategies such as fostering “resistance” and “resiliency” in the forest ecosystems can be considered.

#### *Historic and Desired Conditions*

A historic range of variability (HRV) was developed to determine historic conditions and provide context for building the vegetation desired conditions for the Forest Plan. The AMS Technical Report for the KIPZ Forest Plan Revisions (March 2003) contained preliminary information on HRV for the KNF. This report defined the HRV as the range of variation in spatial, structural, compositional, and temporal characteristics of ecosystem elements as affected by minor climatic fluctuations and disturbances. This range is measured using a reference period prior to intensive resource use and management. For the KNF, this period is considered to be approximately 2,500 years ago up until 1880 (Chatters and Leavell 1994). The HRV is the baseline for comparison with current conditions to assess the degree of past change.

To complete the HRV and analyze current conditions, KIPZ chose the following three ecosystem characteristics to quantify and describe:

- Composition (Dominance type or species composition)
- Structure (Size class)
- Landscape pattern (Fragmentation)

Historic ranges for dominance type and size class were developed at both the forestwide scale as well as for each of the three biophysical settings. Landscape pattern was assessed by geographic area and at the forestwide scale.

The HRV analysis used a wide variety of sources and methods to assess historic conditions, including:

- Information about post-glacial (last 11,000 years – Holocene Era) climate and vegetation changes to set context for more recent conditions;
- Narrative descriptions from the early expeditions (Stevens Expedition during 1853-55 and Mullan Road Journals for 1859-61);
- Data, maps, and narrative descriptions from the 1890s contained in government surveys done in conjunction with the establishment of the Forest Reserves (Leiberg's reports 1897);



- Data, maps, and narrative descriptions from numerous Timber and/or Forest Management Plans done on most proclaimed national forests on approximately a decadal basis from 1910s through the 1960s;
- John Losensky's 1993 report: Historical Vegetation in Region 1 by Climatic Section;
- Data from various Region 1 reports on timber conditions on national forests during the first half of the 20th century;
- Information on fire return intervals from fire history investigations in these ecosystems;
- Historical accounts of the 1910 and other fires;
- Maps of large fires dating from approximately 1880s through the 1970s;
- Spatial and numerical analysis of 1930s/1940s maps on six townships selected to portray the diversity of the KNF landscape;
- Historical and vegetation change information from the late 1990s Interior Columbia River Basin Assessment;
- Change information from the 1998 Forest Service, Northern Region Overview;
- Pollen, sediment, and charcoal analysis (Chatters and Leavell 1994); and
- Negative exponential model for age classes.

A variety of historic data and information sources was assessed and compared to avoid omissions and biases that may be inherent in any one source. Trends through time from one data source to another were examined to uncover any information that may be in contradiction to the preponderance of evidence. Information in both narratives and historical forest inventories was also compared to objective evidence such as historic landscape scale photos, historical records and maps of major forest fires, and various fire history studies. Findings from the Interior Columbia River Basin Assessment, the US Forest Service Northern Region Overview (USDA Forest Service 1998 October), and model (negative exponential model) results were also included in the analysis.

Development of HRV was an iterative process, involving teams of specialists from the districts and supervisor's offices, including silviculturists, ecologists, timber managers, wildlife biologists, and fire managers with extensive field knowledge. These specialists reviewed the historic and current information to develop historic conditions for their study area.

In addition, two parametric fire history models (the negative exponential and the Weibull models) were used to develop theoretical age class distributions. These models were tailored for forest fire regimes and diversity. These outputs were reviewed and adjusted based on data from existing stands (analysis of age class and structure) and an understanding of historic disturbance effects.

The resulting HRV was then reviewed in the context of climate change. Results from HRV were found to be consistent with conditions that would improve resistance and resiliency under climate change. This resulted in the ranges for vegetation desired conditions by species and size class presented in the revised Forest Plan. Because it will take many decades to achieve these desired ranges, the desired condition for vegetation is to move towards these ranges.

#### *Forest Vegetation Condition*

The composition and structure of the forest vegetation was assessed using two primary sources of data: a spatial map source developed from sensing and an inventory source.

The spatial map source used in analysis of vegetation was the Northern Region Vegetation Mapping Project (R1-VMP). This mapping project was completed for the Northern Region of the Forest Service in April 2004, and provides a geospatial database of vegetation and land covers (Brewer et al. 2004, Brewer et al. 2006). These datasets were produced following consistent analytical logic and methods and mapped continuously across all ownerships. From this, four GIS layers were produced:

- Lifeform
- Tree Dominance Type
- Tree Diameter Class
- Tree Canopy Cover Class

The inventory source used in analysis was data from the forest inventory and analysis. The Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program provides a congressionally mandated, statistically based, continuous inventory of the forest resources of the United States. Since 1930, the FIA program has been administered through the Research and Development branch of the Forest Service, which makes it administratively independent from the NFS. The FIA program is administered by employees of the Interior West Forest Inventory and Analysis work unit, which is headquartered at the Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station in Ogden, Utah.

The FIA program collects, analyzes, and reports information on the status and trends of America's forests (i.e., how much forest exists, where it exists, who owns it, and how it is changing), providing data related to the changing conditions of trees, and other forest vegetation. The FIA program combines this information with related data on insects, diseases, and other types of forest damages and stressors to assess the health and potential future risks to forests. The FIA program also projects these trends through the next 50 years and displays how various management scenarios would affect forest vegetation through time. Additional information on the FIA program can be found on the internet (<http://www.fia.fs.fed.us>).

The FIA data used for forest planning was collected from 1993 to 1995 on the KNF. The FIA data was used to quantify both species and size class at the forest and biophysical setting scales. The FIA data was also used to develop growth and yield tables for the vegetation modeling.

### Analysis Area

The affected area for direct and indirect effects to terrestrial vegetation is the lands administered by the KNF. This area represents the NFS lands where changes may occur to vegetation as a result of management activities or natural events.

The affected area for cumulative effects to terrestrial vegetation includes the lands administered by the KNF, as well as the lands of other ownership, both within and adjacent to the KNF boundaries.

### Changes between Draft and Final

#### *Modifications to plan components related to old growth:*

- Modifications were made to several of the plan components associated with the old growth resource. Additions were made to FW-DC-VEG-03 to express the desire that old growth stands be well distributed across the various geographic areas on the Forest and that old growth stands (or groups of contiguous stands) increase in size. Additional information on these items has been added to the old growth section in this FEIS. The phrase "other lands

managed for old growth” was removed from FW-DC-VEG-03 because it was not needed in order to express the desire that the amount of old growth increase on the Forest

- A modification was made to both FW-STD-VEG-01 and FW-GDL-VEG-01 to eliminate the word “minimum.” The underlying intent of those plan components is to allow some vegetation management activities within some old growth stands under certain conditions as long as the activities would not modify the stand to the extent that it would no longer meet the definition of old growth. Examples of the circumstances in which the Forest would consider proposing vegetation management activities in old growth stands has been added to the old growth section in this FEIS.

*Additional information provided concerning old growth:*

- Additional information and results of analysis for old growth were included in both the affected environment and environmental consequences sections of this FEIS. The quantitative estimates of existing old growth and potential future old growth were updated as a result of newer analysis. This additional old growth information was provided in order to address the numerous public comments that were received on the topic. Some of the additional information that was added to this FEIS was contained in the specialist report for forest vegetation at the time the draft Forest Plan and DEIS were released to the public, and some was developed since the drafts were released.

*Adjustments made to model simulations:*

- As described in more detail in appendix B of this FEIS, between the development of the draft and final EIS the forest vegetation simulations that were made using the SIMPPLLE and Spectrum models were modified. There were a number of reasons for re-running those models but the two primary motives were to simulate the possible warming and drying influence from potential climate change impacts, and to correct deficiencies that were identified in the wildfire behavior, fire suppression, and insect/disease related elements of the previous SIMPPLLE modeling effort. As a result of re-running the models, the quantitative estimates of how the forest vegetation would change in the future for each alternative changed. Therefore, many of the numbers presented in the environmental consequences section of the FEIS related to forest vegetation have changed.

*Additional information provided regarding western white pine and the tree improvement and reforestation program:*

- As mentioned in a number of places in the revised Forest Plan and this EIS, restoration efforts for the western white pine are an extremely important component of the broader program to trend the forest vegetation on the KNF towards a condition that is more resistant and resilient towards natural and man-caused disturbances and stressors. One part of the program to increase the dominance of this tree species in the Forest is the tree improvement and planting activities that are designed to increase the level of resistance that the white pine have against the non-native blister rust disease. The DEIS contained some information on this topic. However, in reviewing the public comments regarding this issue it was apparent that providing additional information would be helpful for some readers to understand the necessity of the program and the genetic implications.

*Expanded discussion regarding the desired future condition for forest vegetation:*

- The Forest received a number of public comments on the draft Plan/EIS that expressed concerns regarding the use of the historic range of variability (HRV) information in the development of the desired future conditions for forest vegetation. In general, those

comments were responded to in appendix G. However, additional information was also provided in this FEIS under the heading of “Forest Composition.”

## Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

### *Forest Succession*

Prior to presenting the existing, historical, and desired conditions for forest vegetation, it is helpful to have a general understanding of some of the important factors that affect the composition, structure, patterns, and ecological processes that occur in forest communities on the KNF.

Processes and conditions that occur in vegetative communities are a result of interactions between the biological and physical environments in which they occur, as well as the history of natural and human-caused disturbances. To classify forest vegetation according to physical and environmental factors, a classification system called habitat typing was created. Habitat types are based on natural relationships and reflect ecological patterns and the capability of vegetation on a site.

The designation of habitat types and the classification of forest stands were established to characterize vegetation based on potential “climax” conditions (Pfister et al. 1977). Climax conditions represent the culmination of overstory and understory plant succession without disturbance. Because climax species, by definition, are those species that are self-perpetuating in the absence of disturbance, and because disturbances are relatively common on most sites, the occurrence of climax conditions is rare (Pfister et al. 1977).

In various sections of this FEIS, the terms succession and seral stages are used. Succession can be defined as the sequential process of long-term plant community change and development that occurs following a disturbance. Succession causes changes in forest composition, structure, and function. For example, following a stand-replacing wildfire a site may be dominated by grasses and herbaceous plants for a few years; then be dominated by shrubs for a decade or two; then be dominated by tree species that need open sunlight to regenerate (e.g., western larch, ponderosa pine, western white pine); and ultimately (if there's no new disturbance) be dominated by slower growing tree species that can regenerate in the shade (e.g., grand fir, hemlock, cedar). However, in complex ecosystems such as the forests on the IPNF, there are multiple successional pathways possible for any given site, depending upon the type of disturbance and the conditions when the disturbance occurs. For example, on forest sites that are warm/moist (also known as the cedar-hemlock zone), Shiplett and Neuenschwander (1994) describe five idealized successional chronologies based solely on the influence that fire disturbances have on the successional pathways. As described and visually depicted by Fischer and Bradley (1987), these successional pathways can be very complex; even when they only include the consideration of one disturbance factor such as fire. When other disturbance factors are considered such as insects, disease and weather, the possible pathways become even more numerous and complex.

The different stages of succession are often referred to as seral stages and can be described as follows:

- **Early- seral:** Communities that occur early in the successional path and generally have less complex structural developmental than other successional communities. Stands dominated by trees in the seedling/sapling to small size classes are typically in this early seral stage.

- **Mid-seral:** Communities that occur in the middle of the successional path. For forests, this usually corresponds to stands that are dominated by trees in the small-medium size classes.
- **Late-seral:** Communities that occur in the later stage of the successional path with mature, generally larger individuals. Generally, stands in this late-seral stage will be dominated by trees in the large size class.

### *Biophysical Setting*

To characterize the existing, historical, and desired forest vegetation across the KNF, three Biophysical Settings were recognized: Warm/Dry; Warm/Moist; and Subalpine.

- **Warm/Dry:** This biophysical setting includes the warmest and driest sites that support forest vegetation. These sites cover approximately 22 percent of KNF NFS lands and occur either at low elevations, at mid-elevations on southerly aspects, or on droughty soils. Vegetation response units 1 through 3 occur in this setting.
- **Warm/Moist:** This biophysical setting includes moist sites that are relatively warm and these sites cover approximately 37 percent of the KNF NFS forested lands. This setting includes low-elevation upland sites with deeper soils on north and east aspects, extensive mid-elevation moist upland sites, and most low- and mid-elevation wet stream bottoms and riparian benches and toe-slopes. Vegetation response units 4 through 6 occur in this setting.
- **Subalpine:** This biophysical setting occurs over approximately 41 percent of the KNF NFS forested lands and occupies the higher elevations of the Forest. This setting ranges from the cool and moist, lower subalpine sites up to the cold and dry, high elevation sites that have more open forests and occur between forest and alpine tundra. The moist end of this setting is common on northwest to east-facing slopes and riparian and poorly drained subalpine sites. The cool to cold dry sites occur at higher elevations and typically have a short growing season. Vegetative response units 7 through 11 comprise this setting.

These biophysical settings are broad groupings of vegetative response units that have been aggregated by factors that regulate disturbance regimes and successional responses (such as habitat types, landform, and other topographic characteristics such as aspect); combined with climatic factors such as temperature and moisture gradients. The vegetative response units are equivalent to the land unit, or ecological land unit, as described in the National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (Cleland et al. 1997). A comprehensive discussion of each of the individual vegetative response units, and a discussion of the methodology used to delineate them is presented in USDA Forest Service 1999.

Areas within each of the biophysical setting have similar patterns in potential natural communities, soils, hydrologic function, landform and topography, lithology, climate, and natural processes (e.g., nutrient and biomass cycling, succession, productivity, and fire regimes). Biophysical settings on the KNF are displayed in figure 6.

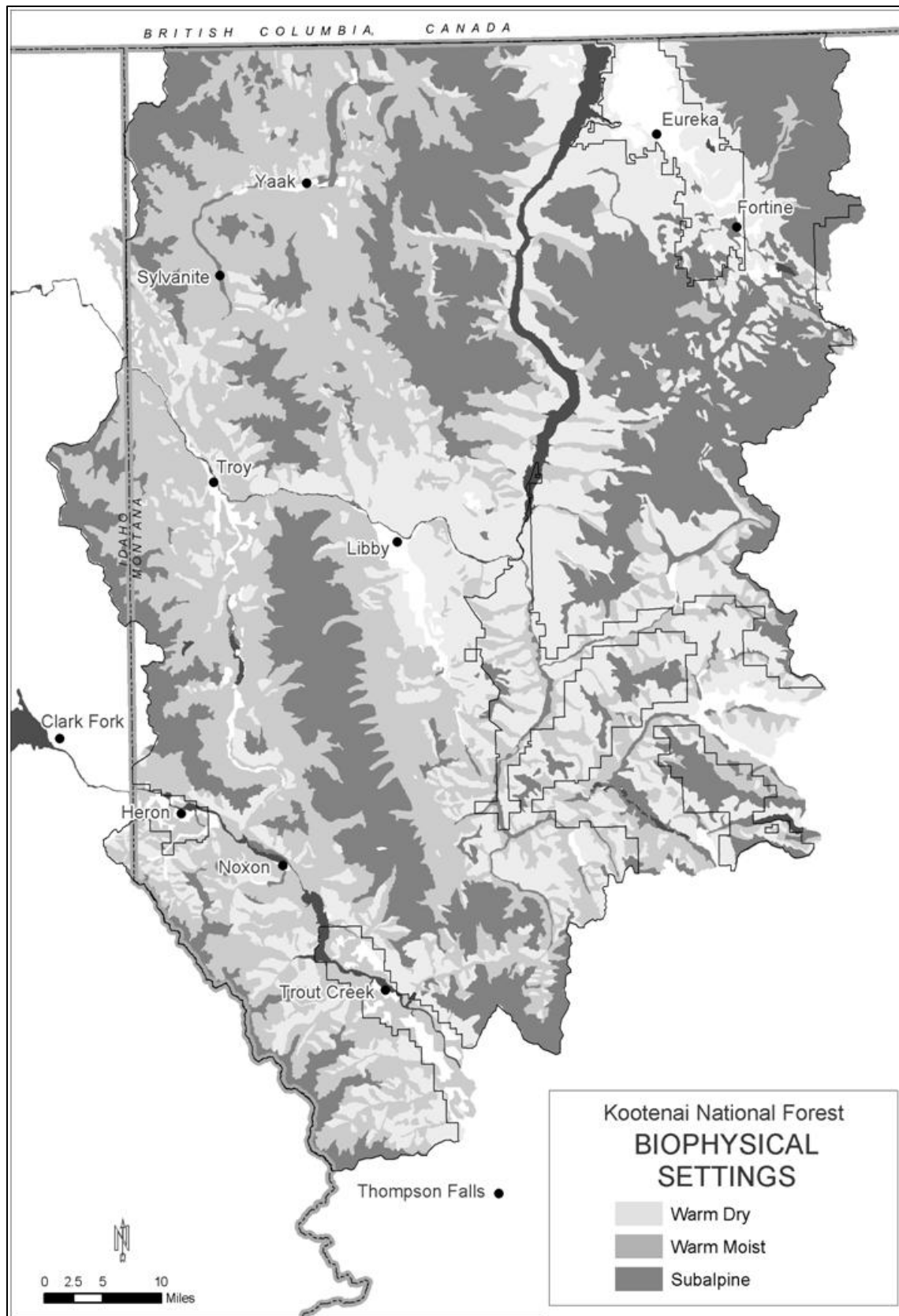


Figure 6. Map of the three Biophysical Settings on the KNF

### *Disturbance Types and Processes*

The AMS Technical Report (USDA Forest Service 2003 March) described the historic and current disturbance processes (pages 3 to 7). Disturbance processes include the following: climate; weather; wildfire; management activities of timber harvest and prescribed burning; and insects and disease. These disturbance processes have a great influence on vegetation composition and function. The following information is generally in addition to what is included in the AMS Technical Report on this topic.

### *Climate*

The climate within the Interior Columbia River Basin, which includes the KNF, is particularly dynamic because it has a transition-type climate, which is influenced by three competing air masses:

1. Moist, marine air from the west that moderates seasonal temperatures;
2. Continental air from the east and south, which is dry and cold in the winter and hot with convective precipitation and lightning in summer; and
3. Dry, arctic air from the north that brings cold air in winter and helps cool the area in summer.

The relative strengths of these air masses can vary greatly over time, change rapidly, and are controlled by large-scale weather patterns, including the position of the jet stream and continental-scale patterns of high and low pressure systems. Northeastern Washington and northern Idaho is an area where the variability caused by the interaction of these three air masses is great (Ferguson 1999).

Because of the strong influence of inland marine airflow, precipitation in northern Idaho and northwest Montana is generally heavy compared to the rest of the Rocky Mountains. However, precipitation tends to vary on a decadal basis, with wet periods and dry periods each lasting several years to decades (Finklin and Fischer 1987). Extended droughts raise the fire danger and stress trees, especially the more drought intolerant species. During drought times, these stressed trees are less able to resist insect and pathogen attacks. Recent research has found evidence that decadal scale fluctuations in climate, such as those caused by the Pacific decadal oscillation, can have a large influence on forest disturbance processes such as wildfires and insect outbreaks (Bollenbacher 2010, Hessl et al. 2004, McKenzie et al. 2009, Morgan et al. 2008, Westerling et al. 2006). This climatic variability creates an environment prone to a high frequency of a variety of disturbances. Rocky Mountain forest ecosystems are (and were historically) a mosaic of disturbance-derived patches of various ages and composition. Historically, fire was the primary disturbance agent throughout most Rocky Mountain ecosystems (Barbour and Billings 2000 or Peet 2000), but insects, pathogens, and weather events were also important.

An assessment on climate change for the planning zone synthesized the most recent scientific information regarding how future climate change may impact forest resources and disturbance processes on the KNF and the IPNF (USDA Forest Service 2010b). The report concluded the average annual temperatures will increase 2.2°F by the 2020s and 3.5°F by the mid-21st century. The greatest temperature increases are predicted for the summer season. Precipitation predictions are considered less certain, but most of the climate change models project decreases in summer precipitation, increases in winter, and little change in the average. It is also predicted that some extreme events will occur more frequently or with greater magnitude, while others may be less

frequent (i.e., more unusually warm periods and fewer really cold spells). Other research for the northern Rockies (Westerling et al. 2006, Running 2006, Morgan et al. 2008) predicts warmer springs, earlier snowmelt, and hotter, drier summers with longer fire seasons and larger, more intense fires.

### *Weather*

The weather of the KNF is unique to the inland area of the western United States. Strong maritime air flow carries high levels of moisture to this area. Moist maritime air that moves across the Northwest carries significant moisture descending from the Cascade Mountains and across the Columbia Plateau. When this warm/moist air is driven into the KNF, heavy/wet snows can occur. These storms often result in significant windthrow and breakage in species of trees such as Douglas-fir, western hemlock, and grand fir, especially when the ground is not frozen. The narrower crowns of western white pine, the deep rooting habits of ponderosa pine, and the deciduous nature of western larch make them less susceptible to this damage. Root diseases make Douglas-fir especially vulnerable to windthrow events. Dense stands, where tree canopies form contiguous “interlocking” tree crowns and trees tend to be relatively tall and have small diameters, are especially susceptible to damage from heavy snows and/or winds. This can lead to heavy fuel loadings for decades afterwards.

In general, weather events raise the probability of subsequent insect or fire disturbances. Trees broken or blown down in severe weather events provide breeding grounds for some bark beetle species. Weather events that cause large amounts of tree breakage or blowdown are frequently the precipitating event that leads to bark beetle epidemics. In turn, blowdown from weather events and trees killed by insects both create woody fuels that increase fire hazard (USDA Forest Service 2000b).

In the northern Rocky Mountains, precipitation tends to vary on a decadal basis, with wet periods and dry periods each lasting several years to decades (Finklin 1983). Extended droughts both raise the fire danger and stress trees, especially the more drought-intolerant species. Western hemlock and grand fir are two of the more drought-intolerant tree species on the KNF, and are highly stressed during drought periods. In an ecosystem subject to periodic droughts, the succession to these shade-tolerant, drought- and fire-intolerant forest types creates an increased risk of large-scale insect and disease mortality. During droughts these stressed trees are less able to resist insect and pathogen attacks. This climatic variability creates an environment prone to a high frequency and variety of disturbances.

### *Wildfire*

The dominant, historical fire regime that occurred within forested vegetation on the KNF can be characterized as a variable or mixed-severity fire regime (Brown and Smith 2000, Kilgore 1981, Zack and Morgan 1994). This type of fire regime commonly had a moderately short fire return interval for nonlethal or mixed-severity fires, with lethal crown fires occurring less often. Relative to the other two common fire regimes (i.e., nonlethal and stand-replacement regimes) that are often recognized for forested vegetation, the mixed-severity fire regime is the most complex (Agee 2004, Perry et al. 2011). Individual mixed-severity fires typically leave a patchy pattern of mortality on the landscape, which can create highly diverse communities. These fires kill a large percentage of the more fire-susceptible tree species (e.g., hemlock, grand fir, subalpine fir, lodgepole pine) and a smaller proportion of the fire-resistant species, including western larch, ponderosa pine, whitebark pine, and western white pine (Arno et al. 2000, Arno 1980). Across the Northern Rockies (Idaho and western Montana), areas that were characterized as having a mixed-severity fire regime affected approximately 50 percent of the area within



national forests, while the non-lethal regime (also known as low-severity regime) affected approximately 30 percent, and the lethal fire regime (also known as the stand-replacement regime) approximately 20 percent (Quigley et al. 1996). The three fire severity types that occur in this mixed-severity regime are briefly discussed below.

Stand-replacing (lethal) fires are those that result in killing most of overstory tree canopy over a significant area and restarting the successional sequence. Historically, on landscapes dominated by relatively moist habitat types (e.g., those habitat types that dominated the warm/moist biophysical setting), the mean fire return interval was approximately 200 years for stand-replacing fires (plus or minus 80 years), with slightly drier sites burning more frequently and wetter sites burning less frequently (Leavell 2000, Smith and Fischer 1997, Zack and Morgan 1994). The fire-adapted, shade-intolerant tree species in these ecosystems commonly live 140 to 400 plus years. Because the historic mean, stand-replacing fire return interval was shorter than the life-span of many shade-intolerant, early successional tree species, these fire regimes trended forest succession towards dominance by fire-adapted, shade-intolerant, potentially long-lived early-seral tree species (ponderosa pine, larch, white pine, and whitebark pine), as well as towards fire-adapted plant species in the shrub and herb lifeform layers.

Major fire years occur most commonly during regional summer droughts. Lightning storms and wind contribute to the likelihood of a major fire year. During major fire years, stand-replacing fires were commonly on the order of tens of thousands of acres, with some individual fire patches 50,000 acres or larger (Pyne 1982, Zack and Morgan 1994). During major fire events some watersheds were almost entirely burned over, while other large areas were unaffected. In any particular watershed, major stand-replacing disturbances came in pulses with long intervals between the pulses. During the last 100 years, these pulses were synchronized with the occurrence of the warm phases of the Pacific decadal oscillation, and the result was hot and dry local weather (Morgan et al. 2008).

While stand-replacing fires in the Northern Rockies favor long-term dominance by early successional, shade-intolerant tree species, the mean time interval between stand-replacing fires was long enough to allow development of mature and old growth forest structural stages, particularly in locations where fire intervals tended to be longest; for example, in wide riparian zones, moist flats, north slope covers and benches and the lower portions of northern slopes (Zack and Morgan 1994).

Mixed-severity fires kill a moderate amount of the overstory tree canopy, but do not replace the whole stand. Mean fire return intervals typically ranged from 55 to 85 years, depending upon landscape location. On very moist sites they may have been significantly less common, while on drier sites return intervals were 25 years or less (Smith and Fischer 1997, Zack and Morgan 1994). Mixed-severity fires create an irregular patchy mosaic of small- to moderate-sized openings, thinned areas, underburned areas, and unburned areas. Mixed-severity fires generally prolonged the period of dominance by early successional fire-adapted species and at a larger scale, allowed for the development of mature and old growth structural stages dominated by large trees. A classic example of this is the influence that periodic low- to moderate-severity wildfires had on releasing western larch from competing, shade-tolerant tree species. The periodic thinning effect that this had on stands of old growth larch at the Coram experimental forest allowed for this early seral species to be maintained in the forest (Elzinga and Shearer 1997). Fire also played many additional ecological roles as a carbon and nutrient recycling agent, dormancy breaking and stimulating agent for herb and shrub seeds and sprouts, and creator of tree cavities and snags (used by wildlife). Historically, mixed-severity fires were extremely

variable in size (less than one acre to more than 1,000 acres) and introduced both variable-sized patches and internal diversity within larger blocks created by the less frequent stand-replacing fires (Zack and Morgan 1994).

Low-severity (nonlethal) fires are typically underburns that kill very little of the overstory tree canopy. They are most important on drier habitat types where conditions are dry enough to burn more frequently, for example, within the warm/dry biophysical setting). Mean fire return intervals typically range from 10 to 30 years (Smith and Fischer 1997). Low-severity fires typically remove most small understory trees, particularly the more shade-tolerant, fire-intolerant species. On drier habitat types where these fires are common, the frequent burns maintain a large portion of the landscape in relatively open stands of large, shade-intolerant, fire-tolerant species (larch and ponderosa pine with lesser amounts of Douglas-fir).

In the higher elevations forests that occupy the subalpine biophysical setting on the KNF, the fire regime could be characterized as having a 150-175 year return interval for stand replacing fires with mixed-severity fires every 30-50 years (Arno and Davis 1980, Barrett and Arno 1991, Fischer and Bradley (1987).

Across the Forest, the large, infrequent stand-replacing wildfire disturbances created a dynamic shifting mosaic of forest successional stages on a very large scale. In between the stand-replacing fires, vegetation, aquatic systems, and wildlife habitat had long periods to recover. Intermediate disturbances (low-and mixed-severity fire; some insect, pathogen, and weather events) introduced finer scale variability within these larger patches. As a result, blocks of wildlife habitat tended to be large, and blocks of mature/late-successional forest also tended to be large, but internally diverse. Terrestrial/aquatic interactions meant that watershed conditions and fish habitat also tended to form a dynamic, large-scale shifting mosaic. Over time any individual watershed could vary from predominantly mature/old forest (with wildlife and fish habitat) to almost all recently burned over. However, at any given time, at the larger scale of a river sub-basin (500,000 – 2,000,000 acres), the whole range of these conditions was represented in watershed-sized blocks of thousands, to tens of thousands of acres (USDA Forest Service 2000b, Hessburg et al. 2007).

Re-burns of fires have occurred throughout history in this region (Habeck 1987). Re-burns have been associated with, and have normally followed, severe fire years that have burned in high intensity conditions. Stand-replacing fires can create a high fuel loading in both standing and down wood. When the residual fuels from the first fire dry out after several years, the areas can become a strong candidate for re-burn when high temperatures, low humidity, and winds combine.

With the aid of the cool phase of the Pacific decadal oscillation and resultant cool and moist regional climate from 1940 to 1980, the Forest Service was very successful in suppressing wildfires. For the period from 1970 to 2010, over 95 percent of all the fires were less than 10 acres in size, mostly due to fire suppression. Suppression efforts have been particularly effective for low-and mixed-severity fires, virtually removing this agent as a significant disturbance process for the last 60 years. Rapid suppression of all fire starts has also removed most opportunity for fires to grow in size and intensity to become stand-replacing fires.

The success of fire suppression efforts (aided by the cool phase of the Pacific decadal oscillation) and resource management activities over the last 100 years has had a large influence on the structure and composition of forest and rangeland fuel conditions. The function and process of ecological systems has changed and fire suppression and some management activities have

altered fuel loadings. As documented in Keane et al. (2002), the changes include an increase in shade-tolerant species, decrease in fire-tolerant species, increased vertical stand structure, increased canopy closure, increased vertical fuel ladders, greater biomass, greater fire intensities and severities, and increased insect and disease epidemics.

The influence of climate change on the occurrence and types of wildfires in the future is documented in the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b). The report concludes climate changes are likely to increase the frequency of large fire years in the Northern Rockies and that fire seasons will be longer. Some of the climate change modeling efforts has suggested that by the 2080s, the amount of area burned by wildfires in the Pacific Northwest region (including Idaho and western Montana) would double or triple. However, as explained in the KIPZ Climate Change Report in more detail, there are a number of key sources of uncertainty regarding this issue.

#### *Timber Harvest and Prescribed Burning*

Because of the success of fire suppression efforts over the last several decades, regeneration timber harvests are the current predominant stand-replacing disturbance process. Regeneration harvest systems (clearcut, seed-tree, shelterwood) followed by prescribed fire can emulate some of the functions of stand-replacing fire, but not all of them. These silvicultural systems are generally successful in regenerating mixed species stands dominated by early successional shade-intolerant species. However, some regeneration harvests conducted prior to the mid-1990s tended to create unnaturally uniform conditions and did not leave the scattered residual snags, residual live tree patches, and scattered fire-tolerant large live trees (larch and ponderosa pine) that were characteristic of historic fires. In addition, the size of these regeneration harvest units (2 to 40 acres) was much smaller than patches created by historic, natural-fire regimes.

Over the last 15 years, silvicultural prescriptions in the Northern Region have largely been designed to emulate forest composition and structures created by historic fire regimes (Bollenbacher 2010). Intermediate harvest prescriptions such as thinning can favor species that are resistant to fire and create stand structures that are less likely to burn with high intensities. Even- or two-age and multi-age regeneration harvests can change species composition of forests by removing all or part of the current stand, replacing it with different species. The initial open-stand conditions created by even- and two-age harvest prescriptions generally favors resilient shade-intolerant species such as western larch, ponderosa pine, western white pine, and aspen. However, the number of acres that are being treated annually with some form of harvest has decreased dramatically during the last two decades. For example, from 1988 to 1997, the acres harvested with regeneration prescriptions on the KNF went from over 11,000 acres per year down to approximately 5,000 by 1997. This downward trend continued so that by the years 2001 and 2002, the annual regeneration harvest was approximately 1,000 acres (KNF Monitoring and Evaluation Reports for 1997, 2001, and 2002). Relative to the entire forested acreage on the KNF, the 1,000 acres per year represents less than five-hundredths of 1 percent.

The effects of timber harvest on successional processes often depend on whether or not harvest is accompanied by prescribed fire. Where prescribed fire is used, impacts on understory vegetation may more closely replicate the effects of natural fire, and favor fire-adapted, shade-intolerant tree species. Where there is timber harvest with neither prescribed fire nor any other type of site preparation advanced regeneration of shade-tolerant, drought- and fire-intolerant species are more likely to dominate the post-harvest stand (Zack 1994).

Prescribed fire has the potential to emulate many natural-fire ecosystem functions. However, the scale, seasonality, severity, and internal variability of natural fires need to be considered in developing fire prescriptions. To date, prescribed fire efforts of this sort have been relatively small scale compared to natural disturbances.

### *Insects and Pathogens*

Many insects and diseases are found on the KNF and most are native and exist at endemic levels. However, there are some native as well as non-native insects and diseases that are likely functioning outside of their historic role. Other forest diseases, such as stem decays, rusts, needle diseases, and dwarf mistletoe, exist on the KNF but are generally not considered to be significant as they are likely functioning within their historic role.

Mountain pine beetles in white pine, ponderosa pine, and lodgepole pine (and occasionally spruce beetles) are capable of serving as stand-replacing agents. These beetles have a mixed effect on succession. They can open canopies enough to provide regeneration opportunities for shade-intolerant tree species, but more commonly they release shade-tolerant understory tree species. By the fuels they create, bark beetles can influence the probability of large stand-replacing fires, which in turn can reset the successional sequence. In some situations, Douglas-fir bark beetle can also do the same thing on a smaller scale.

As part of the assessment on climate change, a hazard analysis was conducted to determine how much of the Forest was susceptible to mortality from mountain pine beetle, Douglas-fir beetle, and western pine beetle. This report summarizes the current hazard rating as well as the estimated losses that may occur to stands for the period from 2005 to 2020 (table 7). It is estimated that during that period, up to 29.9 percent of the lodgepole pine may be killed by mountain pine beetle, up to 19.2 percent of the Douglas-fir may be killed by the Douglas-fir beetle, and up to 1.0 percent of the ponderosa pine could be killed by either mountain pine beetle or western pine beetle.

Historically, root pathogens most commonly acted as thinning agents. In natural, mixed-species stands, root pathogens caused the greatest mortality in Douglas-fir, followed by true firs (i.e., grand fir and subalpine fir). White pine and larch were the most resistant tree species (Hoff and McDonald 1994, Monnig and Byler 1992). Root pathogens thinned out the Douglas-fir and favored the pines and larch, which increased the amount of pine and larch over the first 150 plus years of stand life (Rockwell 1917). A recent analysis was conducted to determine what the root disease hazard was on lands within the boundaries of the KNF. The results indicate that approximately 6.8 percent of the area has a high hazard, 27.2 percent is moderate, 65.2 percent is rated as low and approximately 9.2 percent has no hazard (additional information about this analysis is available in the project record).

**Table 7. Estimated Bark Beetle Hazard and Estimated Loss 2005-2020<sup>1</sup>**

Bark Beetle and Tree Species	Hazard Class				Estimated Loss			
	High	Moderate	Low	None	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Mountain Pine Beetle in Lodgepole Pine	5.6%	13.2%	5.8%	75.4%	4.5%	6.6%	18.9%	29.9%
Mountain Pine Beetle/Western Pine Beetle in Ponderosa Pine	0.8%	2.9%	1.8%	94.6%	0.4%	0.5%	0.1%	1.0%
Douglas-fir Beetle In Douglas-fir	5.1%	19.6%	21.0%	54.3%	3.1%	8.8%	7.4%	19.2%

<sup>1</sup> This information was derived by using FIA data and the mountain pine beetle hazard rating model imbedded in the Forest Vegetation Simulator model

Historically, western white pine was a common tree species on the KNF, and dominated a very large part of the moist habitat types. In the early part of the 20th century, white pine blister rust (a Eurasian disease) was accidentally introduced to western North America. This exotic disease, combined with a mountain pine beetle outbreak in white pine in northern Idaho in the late 1930s, was the primary cause for the loss of white pine in this area (Neuenschwander et al. 1999). With the loss of white pine, there have been large increases in the amount of Douglas-fir and subalpine fir cover types, and a major acceleration of forest succession toward shade-tolerant, late-successional true firs (grand fir), hemlocks, and cedars.

Historically, western white pine had an important ecological role in forests of the Interior Northwest (Harvey et al. 1995, Monnig and Byler 1992). Especially important was this species ability to form a stable, relatively long-lived, forest that was perpetuated by a combination of mixed-severity and stand-replacing wildfires (Zack and Morgan 1994). Even though fire occurred in this forest type fairly regularly, old-growth structures often persisted for several centuries. Across its range, western white pine is now estimated to be less than 5 percent of what it was at the turn of the 20th century (Neuenschwander et al. 1999).

In an attempt to restore this species to the landscape, there have been successes in genetically improving tree resistance, planting those trees, and then using cultural treatments like pruning to improve survival (Schwandt et al. 1994). The best strategy to save white pine from blister rust is to increase the numbers of rust resistant white pine in these ecosystems by aggressively planting them in openings (Fins et al. 2001, p. 10; and Samman et al. 2003, p. ii).

With the impact of white pine blister rust and the decrease in fire, the role of insects and pathogens as disturbance agents is growing and changing. White pine blister rust accounts for major changes in forest successional patterns, having removed more than 90 percent of two conifer species (white pine and whitebark pine). With the absence of white pine and decreased amounts of ponderosa pine and larch, root pathogens have been transformed from thinning agents into major stand-change agents in Douglas-fir and true fir stands. Root pathogens now produce significant canopy openings on many sites. Depending upon the habitat type, root pathogens may either stall stands in a diseased shrub/sapling/open pole successional stage, or strongly accelerate succession towards shade-tolerant species.

Bark beetles have also changed their role. Because there is more Douglas-fir relative to historical conditions, Douglas-fir bark beetles are now more important change agents than they were historically. In all but the driest habitat types, Douglas-fir bark beetles accelerate succession in the short-run, and in the long-run they create fuel conditions and stand structures that may increase the risk of stand-replacing wildfires.

Native insects and pathogens are also now responsible for a relatively much larger proportion of forest disturbance than they were historically. The impact of insects and pathogens in the short-term is to strongly accelerate succession towards late seral, shade-tolerant tree species. An analysis of pathogen and insect impacts in northern Idaho and western Montana by Hagle et al. (2000) examined successional changes for the period 1935 to 1975. This analysis shows that in 40 years, pathogens and insects changed forest cover types to more late-successional, shade-tolerant tree species on over 80 percent of the area dominated by moist forest habitat types (Hagle and Byler 2000). The same analysis of insect and pathogen impacts also showed that almost 40 percent of the moist habitat type area analyzed was either stalled in small tree structures or was actually moving back towards the small tree structures as a result of the removal of the largest trees.

The potential influence of climate change on some of the key forest insects and diseases of the Northern Rockies is discussed in the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b). In addition, a literature review of climate change and forest diseases of Western North America is presented in Kliejunas et al. (2009). These documents conclude that climate change will lead to reductions in tree health and will improve conditions for some insects such as bark beetles and damaging pathogens such as root diseases.

### *Forest Vegetation Condition*

Forest composition, structure, and function are used in describing forest vegetation condition. Composition is described by the tree species and their amounts on the Forest. Structure is described by size-class, snags, and density of stands. Function is described by landscape patterns. As described in the preceding sections, disturbance affects all these attributes, resulting in current forest vegetation conditions and shaping conditions into the future. The combination of these vegetation conditions reflects its resistance and resiliency to disturbance and stressors, resulting in potential future conditions and the ability to adjust to climate change.

Approximately 93 percent of the national forest land on the KNF is classified as being forested (Vegetation Mapping Project). Within these forested plant communities, trees are the largest and most dominant plants; therefore, they have a large influence over the composition, structure, patterns, and processes that occur on the Forest. The KNF contains some of the most diverse and productive forests found within the Inland Northwest. In addition, because trees dominate most landscapes on the KNF, they are very important to aquatic ecosystems and habitat for wildlife species. Lastly, not only do the trees provide timber and other products for human use, they also provide a host of amenity and intrinsic values (e.g., scenery, recreation, spiritual, cultural). For all of these reasons, the discussion in the following sections focuses on describing the condition of the trees across the Forest, as opposed to the many other types of plants (e.g., shrubs, forbs, ferns, grasses, mosses and lichens).

### **Forest Composition**

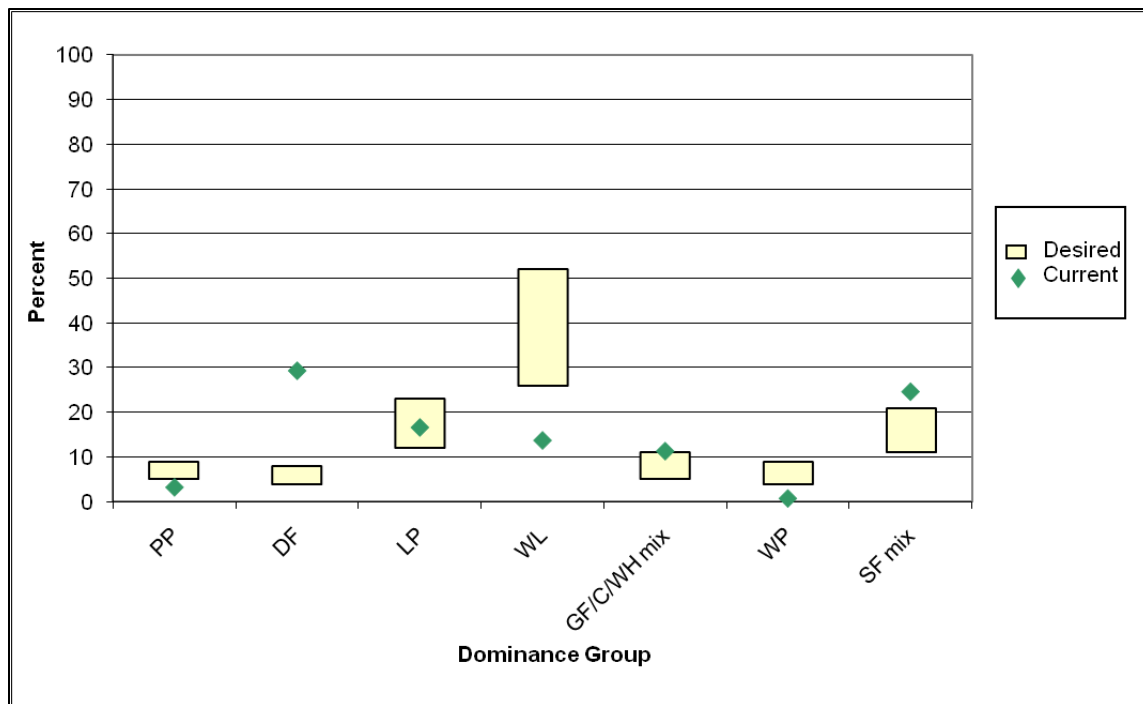
On the KNF, there are fourteen native conifer species<sup>1</sup> as well as four broadleaved species<sup>2</sup>. The conifer species typically dominate the Forest with the broadleaved species being much less prevalent. The forest stands are usually composed of different combinations of tree species with various abundance levels. Often, a mixture of three to five conifer species will occur within an individual forest stand. However, it is not uncommon to find stands that contain six to eight different conifer species as well as one or two broadleaved species. “Pure” stands that contain only one tree species are relatively rare, and it is even somewhat uncommon to find a stand that contains only two tree species.

A classification system was developed based on the most dominant tree species, or mix of common species, that occurs in the forest stands. The result is that there are eight different Dominance Groups to describe the composition of the forest communities. Figure 7 illustrates how much of the Forest is currently occupied by the various Dominance Groups as well as the desired range. The “grand fir/cedar/western hemlock” mix represents those areas that are dominated by one or more of those three tree species. The “subalpine fir” mix Dominance Group includes areas dominated by one or more of the following species: subalpine fir, Englemann

<sup>1</sup> Grand fir, subalpine fir, subalpine larch, western larch, Engelmann spruce, whitebark pine, lodgepole pine, western white pine, ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, pacific yew, western redcedar, western hemlock and mountain hemlock

<sup>2</sup> Water birch, paper birch, quaking aspen, and black cottonwood

spruce, whitebark pine, mountain hemlock, or subalpine larch. The remaining Dominance Groups shown in figure 7 are named for the single most abundant tree species in the stand.



PP = ponderosa pine; DF = Douglas-fir; LP = lodgepole pine; WL = western larch; GF/C/WH mix = grand fir/cedar/western hemlock mix; WP = white pine; and SF mix = subalpine fir mix

**Figure 7. Desired and Current Forest Composition by Dominance Group at the Forestwide Scale**

For the KNF, the most abundant Dominance Groups are the Douglas-fir and the subalpine fir mix (figure 7). Each of those groups occupies over 24 percent of the forested acres. Intermediate in abundance levels are the grand fir/cedar/hemlock mix, lodgepole pine, and the western larch, with each of these groups occupying between approximately 11 and 17 percent. The ponderosa pine and western white pine are the rarest groups depicted in the figure with each occupying approximately 3 percent or less.

In addition to depicting the current condition, figure 7 illustrates the desired amount for each of the Dominance Groups. The desired ranges that are illustrated in the figure represent an approximation of the historic range of conditions for forest composition. The goal is for management actions to move species composition towards the desired ranges.

In a comparison of the current and desired condition, it is apparent that the objective is to increase the amount of western larch, ponderosa pine, and western white pine across the Forest; and to decrease the amount of Douglas-fir, grand fir/hemlock/cedar mix, and subalpine fir mix. The desire for lodgepole pine is to keep it at current levels. The species to decrease are relatively drought- and fire-intolerant, and are fairly susceptible to various insects and diseases. Changing the forest composition towards the desired ranges will increase resistance and resiliency, reducing effects from drought, fire, insects, disease, and climate change (McKenzie et al. 2009).

There are two primary reasons for selecting the specific desired ranges for the Dominance Groups that are depicted in figure 7. First, it is generally recognized in the scientific literature that the most effective approach to maintaining biodiversity, and therefore the sustaining forest



ecosystems, is to manage them so that the conditions and processes approximate the range of conditions that occurred historically and with which all of the native species and communities evolved under (see earlier discussion on HRV for more detail). Second, when considering how climate change may affect forest vegetation, the same general goals regarding what the desired forest composition should be are appropriate. That is, relative to the current conditions, the desire is that the forests contain a greater abundance of tree species that demonstrate more of the following traits: less susceptibility to being killed by forest insects and diseases, more resistance to fire, more tolerance of drought, relatively long-lived, and being more productive.

The potential effects of future climate change scenarios on forest composition on the KNF are explored in the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b). Thus far, most modeling efforts do not produce consistent predictions on how climate change might influence forest composition. In addition, a number of important factors that could affect predictions have yet to be included in model simulations. However, the general consensus seems to be that projected changes in climate are likely to significantly stress many forest communities and tree species. Therefore, it would be logical to attempt to increase the abundance of tree species in the forest that tend to exhibit more resistance and/or resiliency towards the common agents and/or conditions that can lead to stress and mortality. For example, some forest entomologists suggest that climate change is likely to increase bark beetle population eruptions and tree mortality (USDA Forest Service 2010b); and therefore, by increasing the abundance of tree species that tend to be resistant to beetle attacks, such as western larch, it could lead to a more resilient forest. In addition, western larch and ponderosa pine are very resistant to fire-caused mortality and are long-lived. Given that climate change may increase the incidence of large stand-replacing wildfires (USDA Forest Service 2010b), it is desirable to increase the abundance of these two species in order to create more resilient forests. Western white pine, which is not only very unrepresented in the forests of north Idaho relative to historical conditions, but this white pine tree is very productive and is fairly resistant to root diseases. In addition, if the abundance of this pine could be increased, it could potentially serve to sequester more carbon than some other tree species. If a combination of white pine, ponderosa pine and larch are restored in locations where root disease severity and species composition is high for susceptible species such as grand fir, Douglas-fir, and hemlock, then significant potential carbon sequestration benefits will result at both the stand and forestwide scales. By trending the forest composition towards more resistant and resilient conditions, stress complexes, such as those that develop from drought, fire, insects, diseases, and climate change, could be reduced (McKenzie et al. 2009, USDA Forest Service 2010b). This approach of reducing the stresses on the forest represents one of the adaptive management approaches to climate change that has been identified, and it has been called a “no regrets” strategy (Joyce et al. 2008). However, to be effective, this strategy must be applied at the scale of the problem. Small steps over long periods of time may not meet the expectation of having a resilient forest ecosystem anytime soon.

### *Western White Pine*

With the loss of western white pine, the forests on the KNF are less productive and are not as resilient. They have become insect-pathogen-fire-prone forests that are less valuable for many amenities, including carbon sequestration (Atkins et al. 1999, Harvey et al. 1995, Monnig and Byler 1992). Despite their inherent high growth potential, the forests that were formally dominated by western white pine trees are now one of the lowest storage compartments for fixed carbon in the northern Rocky Mountains (Birdsey 1992). In the past, white pine sites have produced high volumes of white pine and other species and volumes that rank among the best in the country (Haig et al. 1941).

Historically, western white pine was considered to have served as a “keystone” species in forests within this area. As discussed in detail in Mills and Soule (1993), a keystone species is one whose loss leads to significant changes in ecosystem structure, materials, and energy flows. Because of the blister rust disease, the mountain pine beetle outbreak in white pine in the late 1930s, and subsequent logging to capture expected mortality from the disease, very little white pine remains and this trees’ ecological role as a keystone species has been altered (McDonald et al. 2000). As depicted in Figure 7, western white pine historically dominated approximately four to nine percent of the forested area on the KNF, while it is only dominate on approximately one percent of the acres today. Therefore, there are a lot of processes and functions that have been altered. For example, because stands dominated by western white pine have different canopy structures than stands without white pine, the dynamics of hydrologic processes could have changed (McDonald et al. 2000). Due to the loss of the western white pine, these forests now both accumulate less carbon as a result of tree growth, but they also release more carbon as a result of accelerated decomposition of the more rot prone species that replaced the white pine (McDonald et al. 2000). In addition, increased mortality from root disease, insects, and low levels of carbon sequestration in the main canopy of the Forest would increase fuel loads and these forests would have more ladder fuels that could facilitate a relatively slow moving surface fire to become a faster crown fire. The shallow rooted, climax species that have low and dense crowns have larger accumulations of litter on the soil surface than do forests dominated by seral species. This can lead to more nutrients (mostly nitrogen) in the top soil horizon and predispose them to potential losses from wildfires (Harvey and Morgan 2001).

As briefly mentioned above under the heading of “Insects and Pathogens,” the KNF has been helping to restore the western white pine. One of the efforts involves a tree improvement/breeding program that is designed to build upon the natural resistance that some white pine trees have towards the non-native blister rust fungus. Then, seedlings that have been improved upon to have greater levels of resistance towards the disease are planted out in openings created by fires or harvest activities. During the review of the public comments on the DEIS, some respondents questioned the reason for the breeding program when the “natural” populations of white pine had some levels of resistance already. The following discussion represents a response to that public concern/question<sup>1</sup>.

The advancement of blister rust resistance in naturally regenerated western white pine through natural selection is one facet of the western white pine restoration program in the Northern Region of the Forest Service (which includes the KNF). The role of natural regeneration needs to be evaluated in the context of both natural selection and the current threats facing western white pine. The same threats that are facing other five-needle pines are also negatively impacting western white pine: blister rust has already been mentioned, but also keeping western white pine from occupying its former range in the Inland Northwest are mountain pine beetle epidemics and altered fire regimes (both fire exclusion and catastrophic wildfire). Though white pine has a generalist adaptive strategy (Rehfeldt et al. 1984), the impacts of predicted warmer and drier climates, or warmer and variable participation will also impact the persistence and distribution of western white pine (Richardson et al. 2009). Examination of historic range of variability and current species distribution indicates western white pine is occupying a position of 5-10 percent of its former range (Fins et al. 2001). If reliance on natural regeneration was a successful strategy in and of itself, then we would have seen an increase in the species distribution since the identification of phenotypically resistant western white pine in the early 1950s; however, current

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<sup>1</sup> The information that follows was provided by the Regional Forest Geneticist for the Northern, Rocky Mountain, Southwestern and Intermountain Regions of the Forest Service (Mary F. Maholovich, PhD).

species distribution levels are remaining with the range of 5-10 percent range, showing no expansion.

There is a fairly widespread misunderstanding of expectations of blister rust resistant material available from the genetics program, typically centered on the definitions of immunity, resistance, and susceptibility. Immunity implies the complete absence of rust symptoms: no spotting, no branch flagging, and no active or inactive cankers. The genetic mechanism behind this response is usually single gene or maybe oligogenic inheritance (~ 5-7 genes) (Van Der Plank 1984). A related concept is virulent races of rust and major gene resistance. Interior western white pine does not exhibit major gene resistance, or a gene-for-gene action between white pine and blister rust, unlike coastal western white pine (Champion Mine race) or sugar pine (Happy Camp race) (Kinloch and Dupper 2002). Major gene resistance is considered evolutionary primitive to partial gene resistance (Nelson 1978). Crop and agronomy programs emphasizing stripe rust and smut resistance provide examples of how quickly varietal releases must be continually developed to overcome increased virulence in these gene-for-gene systems. It is both biologically and economically unfeasible to try and develop immunity in a selective breeding program. As such, since we are not developing immunity in our white pine genetics program, we are not applying undue selection pressure on the pathogen (Fins et al. 2001).

The Merry Creek location is elucidated to be a location where a putative virulent strain of blister rust occurs in Idaho. There are no peer-reviewed publications confirming a more virulent rust resistant strain in the Inland Northwest. Virulence typically results from of a formerly neutral allele increasing in frequency in the population and thereby inferring higher infection levels (Van Der Plank 1984) or through phenotypic plasticity (McDonald et al. 2005). Epidemiologically, virulence in a pathogen is typically not from mutation, as mutation rates are very rare and even rarer that these new genes would have a positive fitness value and favored via natural selection. For a western white pine tree to remain alive even though cankered is an important resistance mechanism (canker tolerance) for it permits blister rust to continue its life cycle, thus decreasing selection pressure for new races of rust (Bingham et al. 1971, Hoff 1982).

If a virulent strain of blister occurred among all of the stock types at the Merry Creek location we would also see high levels of mortality in all of the stock types (control, F1, B1, and F2); mortality and infections vary by stock type. One thing to note in both the 1971 Merry Creek test cited below and the 2005 Merry Creek realized gain trial adjacent to this test, is the poor performance of the control lot relative to F1, B1, and F2 stock types. The controls serve as examples of unimproved and hence, expectation of naturally regenerated western white pine. Based on 7-year data from the 2005 Merry Creek test location, infection levels in the control plots is 24 percent and only 9 percent in the F2 stock (Mahalovich, unpublished data). What is more compelling are those data reported for the 1971 Merry Creek test based on 26-year data (Fins et al. 2001). Infection levels are 100 percent in the controls and 93 percent in the F2 stock; however, the control lot, representing what we can expect from natural regeneration has achieved 100 percent mortality. Rather than focus on this one test location, three other sites were reported in Fins et al. (2001). Averages over four test locations are shown in table 8.

**Table 8. White Pine Blister Rust Infection and Mortality Levels for Each Stock Type (averages expressed as percentages)**

Stock Type <sup>1</sup>	Infection (%)	Rust Mortality (%)
F2	60.3 ( $\pm 30.3$ ) <sup>2</sup>	25 ( $\pm 27.4$ )
Control	95 ( $\pm 4.7$ )	67 ( $\pm 29.1$ )

<sup>1</sup> F2 stock type represents the white pine seedlings that contain rust resistant mechanisms that resulted from the rust resistance breeding program. The Control stock type is white pine seedlings that have not been bred to be resistant to the blister rust

<sup>2</sup> These numbers in parentheses are the confidence intervals surrounding the mean estimates

Resistance as defined in an individual though infected and exhibiting blister rust symptom(s) is able to survive, thrive, and reproduce. The objective of the genetics program is balancing selection (Mahalovich 2010), recognizing that blister rust cannot be removed from the landscape. This approach is also documented in (Fins et al. 2001). It remains to be seen if the western white pine and white pine blister rust will evolve into a mutualistic or symbiotic host-pathogen relationship. The genetics program incorporates seven rust resistance traits at the family and within-family levels; six of those traits require infection for the resistance to be expressed. Reported infection levels, such as the 60.3 percent cited among four long-term tests need to be adjusted for the frequency of the rust resistance traits to determine susceptibility (60.3 – 27 percent using Cycle 22 data) = 33.3 percent. Our deployment strategy is not based on the premise of artificially increasing the numbers of some resistant genotypes. Family selection of partial gene resistance traits is based on a weighted index and within-family selection is based on an individual exhibiting no-spot, needle shed, short shoot, or bark reaction resistant traits. Since orchards are blocked by those four traits, an equal number of each of the individuals by each of these four traits (plus the background level of improvement via family selection) serves to provide a balanced selection approach in the host for the express purpose of not applying undue selection pressure in the pathogen (Van Der Plank 1983, Mahalovich 2010).

The expected gains of 66 percent rust resistance is based on nursery data (Fins et al. 2001). We now know that the realized gain is 20 percent (Lupo 2004) based on 30-year data from similar F2 stock types at Canyon Creek (IPNFs) and Hog Meadows (Nez Perce-Clearwater NF). We do not see a loss in family representation (effective population size) nor do we see a differential representation among the four, individual-tree traits over time (Lupo 2004). Restoration progress will certainly proceed more rapidly with planted, rust resistant stock and known levels of genetic diversity (Kim et al. 2010), without concerns over founder effects or genetic drift curtailing genetic diversity in naturally regenerated western white pine.

### *Broadleaved Species*

In addition to conifers, there is a small amount of area (approximately 0.7 percent) of the forest that is dominated by broadleaved species. These species typically occupy in relatively small stands, and are often located in riparian areas or on moist upland sites. Of the four species that occur on the KNF, paper birch, quaking aspen, and black cottonwood are the most common with water birch being relatively rare. Although these species are not shown in figure 8, the desire is to see an increase in their abundance on the Forest.

### *Whitebark Pine*

Whitebark pine is a tree species that was grouped together with some other species (subalpine fir, Englemann spruce, mountain hemlock, subalpine larch) to form the subalpine fir mix Dominance Group that is presented in figure 7. Whitebark pine trees occur on some of the higher

ridges and mountain tops across the KNF. Where they occupy lower elevations within their range, they typically serve as a minor early seral species in mixed conifer stands. At the other extreme, where they are found at the uppermost elevations in rather pure stands, they can serve as a major climax species. This tree is considered a “keystone” and “foundation” species because of its significant role in subalpine ecosystems (Keane and Parsons 2010, Tomback and Kendall 2001, Tomback et al. 2001).

The most recent inventory information indicates that some live whitebark pine trees occur over approximately 2 percent of the forested area of the KNF (USDA Forest Service 2010 September). Recently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed a status review of whitebark pine for potential listing as a threatened or endangered species. They concluded that the species warranted listing but was precluded because of the need to address higher priority species. Whitebark pine is now designated as a Candidate species. The regional forester has placed whitebark pine on the sensitive species list for Region One. The principle reasons for the concern over this tree species stems from the fact that mountain pine beetles, fire exclusion policies, and the introduced non-native white pine blister rust disease have been found to be responsible for the significant decline of this species across its range in western North America (Keane and Parsons 2010, Keane et al. 2012, Schwandt 2006). In addition, climate change could detrimentally affect this tree species either directly or indirectly through interactions of bark beetles, blister rust, wildfires, or a combination (Keane and Parsons 2010, USDA Forest Service 2010 September, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service 2010).

In northern Idaho and northwestern Montana, white pine blister rust has killed a quarter to half of all whitebark pine trees, and since the late 1990s, mountain pine beetle-caused mortality has increased (USDA Forest Service 2010 September).

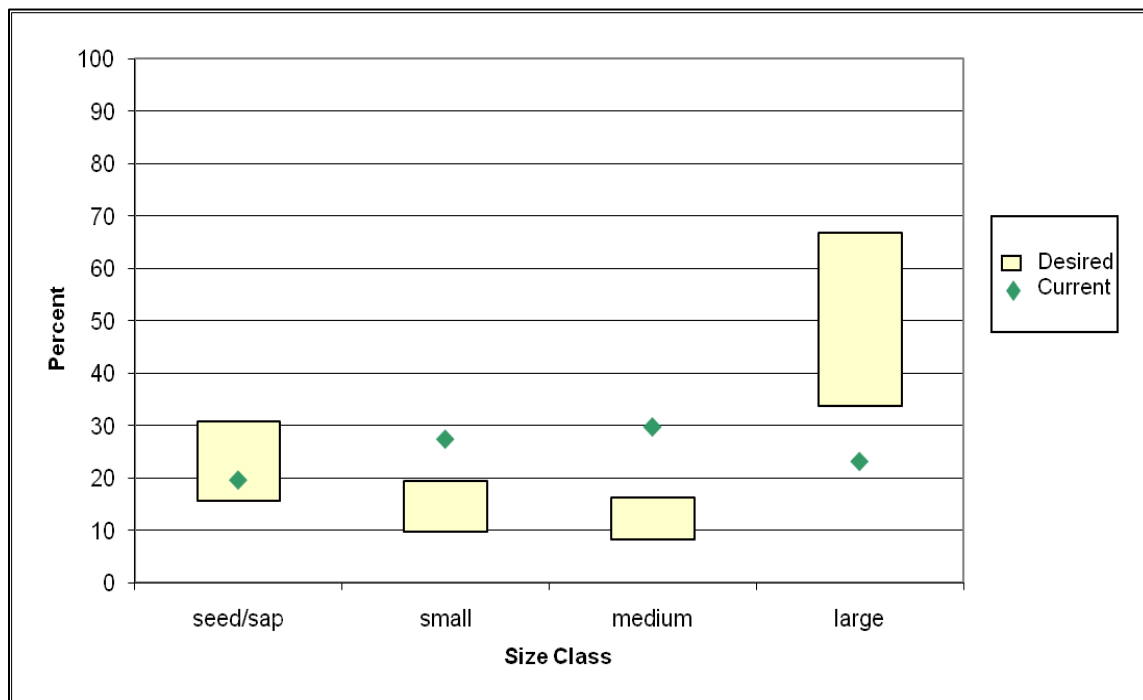
The desired condition for whitebark pine is to increase the abundance of this species on the KNF, and increase the resistance and resiliency of them to disturbances. Active restoration efforts, such as those that are described in Keane and Arno (2001) and Schwandt (2006) are believed to be necessary in order to achieve these objectives. Without management intervention, losses of this tree across its range could have major consequences for biodiversity (Tomback 2007).

In 2012, Keane et al. published a comprehensive restoration strategy for this tree across its entire range (Keane et al. 2012). The KNF has been implementing many of the restoration actions that are suggested in that strategy for the last one to two decades. For example, the KNF has been collecting seed, identifying rust resistant trees testing rust resistance of progeny, conducting prescribed burns, planting seedlings, and monitoring sites (USDA Forest Service, 2010, September, appendix G). However, to date the number of acres that have had some form of restoration activity occur on them has been limited. As described in more detail in the environmental consequences section, most of the whitebark pine sites overlap with habitat for one or more wildlife species that are listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA. Both the Canada lynx and grizzly bear have habitat that overlaps the whitebark pine. The presence of habitat for those wildlife species makes it difficult to aggressively implement restoration activities that are needed for the whitebark pine. Other challenges have been the limited funds that have historically been available as well as the difficult access to many of the remote, high elevation sites.

## Forest Structure

### Size Class

Four size classes were developed to broadly describe and quantify stand structure across the Forest. Figure 8 illustrates how much forested land is currently occupied by each of the four size classes. The medium and small size classes occupy the greatest amount of the forested area on the KNF, at approximately 30 and 27 percent, respectively. The large and seed/sap size classes occupy lower amounts of the forested lands, approximately 23 percent and 20 percent, respectively. In general, stands in the seed/sap size class range from 0 to 40 years old. Stands in the small and medium size classes range in age from 40 to 70 and 70 to 100 years old, respectively. Stands in the large size class are generally 100 years old or older.



(seed/sap = 0-5" DBH trees, small=5-10" DBH trees, medium =10-15" DBH trees, and large =>15" DBH trees)

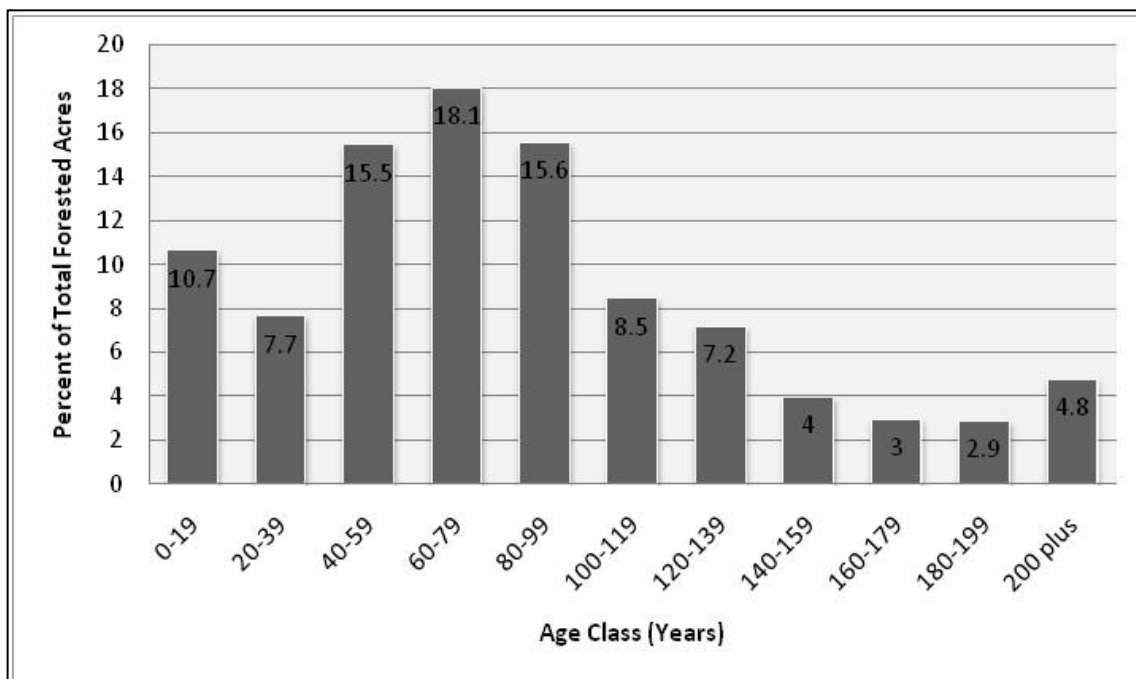
**Figure 8. Desired and Current Forest Structure by Size Classes at the Forestwide scale**

In addition to depicting the current distribution of size classes on the KNF, figure 8 also illustrates the desired amount. The desired ranges that are illustrated in the figure also represent an approximation of the historic range of size classes. In a comparison of the current and desired conditions, it is apparent that the goal is to increase the amount of the large size class and reduce the amount of the small and medium size classes.

### Age Class

Figure 9 presents the distribution of the current age classes of forest stands for the KNF. As visually depicted in that figure, the distribution is skewed towards middle-aged stands that are approximately 40-100 years old. Those stands are generally in the mid-seral stage of forest succession and they comprise a very large percentage of the total forested acreage on the KNF—approximately 49 percent. The 1910 wildfire as well as other wildfires in the 1920s and 1930s was the principal cause of that mid-seral, middle-aged bulge in the age distribution curve. Although it was a much less significant factor compared to wildfires, regeneration type timber

harvesting that occurred from approximately the 1940s to the 1970s also contributed to that bulge.



NOTE: The age-class information present in this figure cannot be used in determining old growth amounts on the Forest. See the project record for details on the data and methodology used in this figure.

**Figure 9. Age class Distribution of Forested Acres over the entire KNF**

The bulge in the age class distribution has a number of implications, one of which concerns wildfire hazard. In general, these middle-aged stands tend to be dense and the trees within them are undergoing intense competition for limited sunlight, water and nutrients and this often results in competition-induced tree mortality. The trees that die either do so directly from this competition or more often, they are weakened to the extent that forest insects and/or diseases kill them. Dead surface fuels build up in these stands and many of the stands have dense tree crowns that predispose them to higher chances of crown fires. Lastly, stands within these structural stages often have shade tolerant tree species growing in the understory of the taller trees, and these understory trees can serve as ladder fuels to allow surface fires to transition into crown fires. Another issue that often occurs within these middle-aged dense stands is that many of the trees will develop into tall and skinny trees that are very susceptible to storm damage. As trees undergo competition between themselves, a tree will allocate resources (photosynthate) to different needs in order of priorities. Height growth has a higher priority than diameter growth (Oliver and Larson 1996). This means that high-density stands may eventually develop tall, spindly trees because height growth continues even after diameter growth slows or stops. These unstable trees are very susceptible to snow or wind breakage and often fall over or break off and increase the surface fuel loadings. Some of the middle-aged stands on the Forest have had treatments within them to thin them out and/or to reduce the hazardous fuels within them. However, the percentage that has been treated is very low. As articulated in the plan components FW-DC-VEG-02 and FW-DC-VEG-05, the desire is to decrease the percentage of the middle-

aged stands on the Forest. Typically these middle-aged stands are dominated by trees in the small or medium size classes.

### *Old Growth*

The KNF has adopted the definitions of old growth developed by the Regional Old Growth Task Force and documented in Green et al. 1992<sup>1</sup>. That document is a comprehensive report that not only presents old growth type descriptions for thirty different types of old growth in Region One, but it also provides the background, ecological concepts and process that was used to develop them. For the KNF, there are eight old growth types that are described in detail in that publication (see pages 23-30). The rationale for using those definitions is not only included in that document, but it is also presented in Bollenbacher and Hann (2008) along with a summary of the science and understanding of forest practices intended to create, maintain, and restore resilient old growth stands.

The adopted old growth definitions cited above are specific to forest type (the dominant tree species) and habitat type group, and are defined by a minimum number of trees, of a minimum age and diameter, in stands with a minimum density. The most common old growth types require at least ten trees per acre, at least 150 years in age, 21 inches in diameter, and have a minimum stand density of 80 square feet of basal area. A thorough discussion concerning how the KNF has been using the Green et al. 1992 publication to identify old growth stands is described in USDA Forest Service (2011). Old growth management direction that was provided in the 1987 Forest Plan is presented in the environmental consequences section.

The KNF utilizes two different inventory and analysis “tools” to monitor and manage the old growth resource. One method uses inventory information from the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program, and the other method is a stand level, GIS map layer, used for project-level delineation and old growth management. The analysis process that utilizes the FIA data is documented in Region One Vegetation Classification, Mapping, Inventory and Analysis Report (Bush et al. 2007 and Report # 06-07, dated April 11, 2006). Information on the validity of using FIA data for old growth (as well as snag estimates) is available in Czaplewski (2004). The most recent analysis that was conducted for the KNF using FIA data to determine how much old growth exist on the Forest was conducted in 2013 (Bush and Reyes 2013a). Based on that analysis approximately 8.9 percent (with a 90 percent confidence interval of 7.0 to 10.9 percent) of the forested acreage across the entire KNF meets the definition of old growth. As shown in that report, the old growth is well distributed across the fourteen landscape analysis areas on the Forest. Estimates and confidence intervals for the individual landscapes are presented in Bush and Reyes (2013a).

The KNF stand-level GIS map layers of old growth represent a spatial depiction of stands that either currently meet the definition of old growth, or are being managed with an objective of meeting the definition sometime in the future, as the trees age and/or grow larger in size (USDA Forest Service 2011a). Stand-level information from the 2010 Forest Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report indicates that 10.8 percent of the forested lands are occupied by stands meeting the old growth criteria and an additional 5.2 percent is being managed with the objective that they meet the old growth criteria in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> When referencing the Green et al. (1992) publication in this section, we are referring to the most recent version that was corrected via an errata in December of 2011.



For the entire state of Montana across all land ownerships, it is estimated that approximately 14 percent of the forested lands are occupied by stands that meet the old growth definitions in Green et al. 1992 (Menlove et al. 2012). For the entire state of Idaho across all land ownerships, it is estimated that somewhere between 12 percent and 32 percent (depending upon what method one uses) of the forested lands are occupied by stands having old growth like structures (Witt et al. 2012).

Regarding the historic range of variability of old growth on the KNF, there is no way to accurately determine how much of the forest may have met the Green et al. (1992) definitions of old growth. In order to determine whether or not a forest stand meets those definitions, it requires detailed information on how many trees per acre exist in the stand over a certain diameter and age, the total stand density, the forest type and lastly, the habitat type group that the stand occupies. No historical information exists that can provide that level of detail. Therefore, a numeric desired condition or an HRV estimate for old growth is not included in this analysis.

Because old growth stands provide valuable ecological and social functions, the KNF developed a number of plan components for all the action alternatives that are designed to increase the quantity of old growth in the future, increase the resistance and resilience of the old growth to disturbances and stressors, and to increase the size of the old growth patches that exist in the future. More details of the old growth related plan components that are incorporated into the action alternatives are provided in the environmental consequence section. That section summarizes what the 1987 Forest Plan direction was for old growth, and contrasts it with the direction that is part of the action alternatives.

As discussed in chapter 2 of this FEIS in the section titled “Alternatives Considered But Eliminated from Detailed Study,” public comments were received during the scoping effort suggesting that the KNF should include plan components in the action alternatives that would require the establishment of large old growth reserves, linkages between those reserves, as well as other measures to protect the existing old growth and to foster the development of additional old growth. In response to scoping comments, the KNF considered an alternative that included those elements but for the reasons that were summarized on page 32 of the DEIS, that alternative was eliminated from detailed analysis. However, after the DEIS was released to the public for comment, we received additional comments on this topic. Some of the old growth related comments received on the DEIS and draft Forest Plan were addressed in appendix G of this EIS, while other comments required a substantial amount of discussion to address them sufficiently, and those items are presented below.

We received a number of comments suggesting that old growth reserves be created to protect existing old growth stands and to develop additional old growth. The comments suggested that we should designate large areas of the forest that contain old growth stands and/or mature/middle-aged stands, and then protect them from the disturbances that could otherwise impact them (e.g., wildfires, insects, diseases, and humans). Some comments went further to suggest that if these reserves were burned up or heavily impacted by other disturbances, that they should be left alone and continue to be managed as old growth reserves even if they no longer contained old growth (or very little of it). Thus, the reserves would essentially be large dedicated areas (possibly with their own specific MA designation) where we hoped old growth type stands would develop one day and persist, but that at any given time, they could be dominated by much younger stands. Lastly, some commenters advocated that we take the existing old growth on the KNF, which is approximately 9-11 percent of the entire forested acreage, add to that amount another 19-21 percent of the forested acreage, to achieve a combined 30 percent of the forested

area in reserves to be managed for old growth purposes. The premise of the 30% seems to be either that it may have represented an approximation of the average amount of the forested area on the KNF that historically was in a condition similar to old growth, or possibly it was suggested because it represented the same figure that was set aside in reserves as part of the Northwest Forest Plan in Oregon and Washington.

While the approach of managing old growth by “reserving” large areas may be appropriate in some regions or types of forests, for example in western Oregon and western Washington where wildfires and other disturbances tend to be relatively rare, the widespread use of this strategy on the KNF does not make ecological sense given our disturbance prone forests as well as the likely impacts from climate change. The old growth reserves that were established as part of the Northwest Forest Plan were called Late-Successional Reserves (LSRs) in the plan, and they essentially comprised 30 percent of the 24 million acres of federal land of the Pacific Northwest region. However, since their establishment in 1994 those reserves have failed to protect old forests in disturbance prone portions of that region and thus the ecological suitability of using reserves as a mechanisms to provide habitat for species that use old growth forests is being strongly questioned (Feinstein 2010, Spies et al. 2009, Noon 2009, Healey et al. 2008, Spies et al. 2006, Camp et al. 1996, Spies 2006, Camp et al. 1997, Camp 2001, Everett et al. 1994, Camp et al. 2006, Bauhus et al. 2009, Carey 2003). In addition, given the likelihood of a greater frequency of wildfires and other disturbances occurring in the future on the KNF as a result of climate change impacts, relying on old growth reserves as the principal strategy for ensuring that amply old growth stands occur into the future makes no sense. Rather, the scientists that are cited above as well as other forest researchers generally advocate that a much broader, all-lands approach be used to increase the resistance and resiliency of the forests to disturbances, and thereby increasing the chances that substantial amounts of old growth will persist into the future.

In Thomas et al. (2006) the authors review the implementation of the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP) and provide suggestions for better achieving the goals of that plan. Several of the key points that the authors make are very relevant to the management of old growth on the KNF. In order to continue to conserve old-growth trees and forests, the authors suggest that classic old-growth within the wetter habitat types be reserved, and that appropriate fuel treatments be undertaken in the drier habitat types to prevent the old trees from being killed from wildfires or bark beetles. Both of these suggestions have been incorporated into the action alternatives associated with this revised Forest Plan. For example, all of the existing old growth stands are being reserved (see FW-DC-VEG-03, FW-STD-VEG-01, FW-STD-VEG-02) while the stands (such as the ones on the drier sites) that have species or conditions associated with them that put them at risk for fires or other disturbances (such as bark beetles) that could kill the old growth trees, would be considered for treatments (see FW-GDL-VEG-01) as opportunities arise. In regard to the sustainability of old-growth in light of wildfire and other disturbance risks, the authors caution that “Unless the federal agencies consider the peril of inaction equal to the peril of action, the goals of the NWFP will not be reached”. As suggested by that quotation, simply circling an old-growth stand on a map and prohibiting all management activity from occurring within it, is not without risks.

In regard to perpetuating old growth forests in dynamic landscapes, Salwasser (2009) states “Perpetuating some older forests will require a combination of conditions within stands that enhance resilience against low to moderate disturbances and redundancy of developmental states across landscapes so that when major stand-replacing disturbances do occur, there are forests moving into older stages somewhere else to replace the altered stands. Where fires have been suppressed for long periods of time, selective removal of some biomass followed by use of

managed fire-perhaps harkening back to prehistorical land use practices- may be needed to restore stand resilience.” On dry forest sites (i.e., drier than the forests of western Washington and Oregon), Franklin (2009) says: “On dry forest sites, climate change encourages us to protect old-growth trees by restoring stands and landscapes to more sustainable conditions. Activities that improve survival of the key structural elements should be of highest priority, given recent wildfire history; furthermore, silvicultural targets should reflect the probability that fire seasons will be ever longer and more severe.” The Forest Plan components noted in the previous paragraph as well as a number of other components (e.g., FW-DC-VEG 01, 04-06, FW-DC-FIRE-03, FW-OBJ-FIRE-01,02) have been included in the action alternatives to address the need expressed above by Salwasser (2009) and Franklin (2009).

In an effort to investigate how many acres of forested stands on the KNF may meet old growth criteria in the coming five decades, two different approaches were used. The first was to use the FIA plot information for the Forest and simply “age” the trees on the plots to determine how much of the Forest may meet the old growth criteria in the future. As discussed in more detail in Bush and Reyes (2013b), the tree ages on the plots were increased by 10 years in five increments over a 50-year period. Then, for each decade (e.g., year 2023, year 2033, etc.) the amount of the forested vegetation that would meet old growth criteria was calculated. In this specific analysis, the trees on the plots were not “grown” in size nor were potential tree mortality modeled. Therefore, the only areas that were predicted to be recruited into old growth stands during the 50 year period were areas (represented by plots) that currently had enough large trees and stocking to meet the minimum criteria, but were only lacking in meeting the tree age criteria. Table 9 below provides a summary of the results of that analysis. More information on the methodology and results, including the confidence intervals as well as the estimates for the individual landscape analysis areas, is provided in Bush and Reyes (2013b).

**Table 9. Percentage of the Total Forested Area on the KNF that Currently Meets Old Growth Definitions and the Estimated Old Growth Amounts for each of the Next 5 Decades**

Year					
2013	2023	2033	2043	2053	2063
8.9	10.1	10.5	11.4	12.7	13.9

As illustrated in table 9 above, the amount of old growth that is predicted to occur across the Forest in the future increases substantially during the next 50 years. As discussed in more detail in Bush and Reyes (2013b), this specific analysis does not factor in tree growth nor does it consider natural or man-caused mortality during that 50-year period. But it does provide evidence that in the absence of large scale dramatic disturbances over the Forest, that old growth amounts should increase in the future due to the large number of acres of forest stands on the KNF that currently meet every old growth criteria except age, but that will meet the age criteria relatively soon.

The second approach that was used to investigate how much old growth may occur on the KNF in the future utilized the SIMPPLLE and Spectrum modeling efforts that were undertaken to predict how forest succession, disturbances and management activities would influence forest vegetation conditions over time for the various Alternatives and under the different scenarios (i.e., with or without budget constraints and under different future climate assumptions). The primary advantage of this approach over the use of the FIA plots is that this modeling effort is able to capture how wildfire, forest insects and diseases, climate change and even management

activities may impact forest conditions in the future. In addition, the SIMPPLLE model is able to simulate how the various disturbances, forest succession and management elements interact with one another in a spatial context. The methodology used for the modeling efforts is presented and discussed at length in appendix B of this FEIS as well as in Chew (2012), Henderson (2013), and Ecosystem Research Group (2012). The results of the modeling effort for each of the alternatives that are analyzed in this FEIS are summarized in the environmental consequence section.

However, one of the results is presented here. If no active management (with the exception of fire suppression) were to occur on the Forest for the next 50 years, and the future climate scenario of a warmer/drier climate is assumed, then the acreage of stands that would have structures similar to old growth is predicted to increase by approximately 78 percent over current amounts. The very large size class (stands that are dominated by 20"+ diameters) was used from the Spectrum model results for this estimate. The dramatic increase in old growth like stands over the 50-year simulation period occurred despite a substantial amount of predicted wildfire, root disease; bark beetle and defoliator caused disturbances (Ecosystem Research Group 2012).

In addition to the public comments that were submitted on the draft Forest Plan and DEIS regarding the creation of large old growth reserves, the KNF also received a number of comments suggesting that additional or revised forest plan components were needed that would prohibit any vegetation treatment activity from occurring in existing old growth stands, or that would only allow treatments to occur in the drier types of old growth stands. The following discussion is meant to provide rationale for why those suggested changes were not made.

The KNF deliberately established language within two components of the action alternatives (FW-DC-VEG-03, FW-GDL-VEG-01) that would allow vegetation management activities to occur within old growth stands *if* the activities were designed to increase the resistance and resiliency of the stands to disturbances or stressors, and if the activities would maintain the criteria for age and number of trees and basal area for the specific old growth type as described in Green et al. 1992. Both the terms resilience as well as resistance (see glossary for definitions) are used in this EIS and revised Forest Plan in the context of forest ecosystems and the desire to increase the resistance and resiliency of the forest vegetation to disturbances and stressors, such as wildfires, droughts, insects and diseases, and potential climate change effects. In regard to the specific desired condition that old growth stands are more resistant and resilient to disturbances and stressors (FW-DC-VEG-03), there are numerous ways that this could be achieved depending upon specific circumstances. The following examples are meant to provide the reader with an idea of the wide range of actions that might be proposed at the site-specific, project level. The examples are not a comprehensive list nor are they meant to preclude other actions from being proposed that are not described here. Mention of North Idaho Zone Old Growth Types in the examples below is referring to the old growth type descriptions in Green et al. 1992. Because one of the main functions of the old growth resource on the KNF is to provide habitat for wildlife (and other organisms such as rare plants) that use old growth type stand structures, any treatments that are proposed would need to be supported by an appropriate wildlife analysis.

**Example 1:** Within old growth stands that occur in the Warm/Dry biophysical setting (i.e., North Idaho Zone Old Growth Type 1 and 4A) and that contain a substantial component of ponderosa pine or western larch, prescribed fire alone or in combination with the cutting of smaller trees could be used to emulate a non-lethal or mixed-severity wildfire that was relatively common on these sites historically, and that often maintained fairly open stands dominated by shade intolerant and fire resistant ponderosa pine and/or western larch tree species.

**Example 2:** Within old growth stands that occur in the Warm/Moist biophysical setting and contain substantial amounts of shade intolerant species (i.e., western Montana Zone Old Growth Type 4 with western larch and/or ponderosa pine), prescribed fire alone or in combination with the cutting of smaller trees could be used to emulate a non-lethal or mixed-severity wildfire that occasionally occurred on these sites historically, and that served to extend the time that shade intolerant western larch or ponderosa pine could maintain their presence in stands that would otherwise become dominated by shade tolerant species (e.g., western hemlock, western redcedar, grand fir).

**Example 3:** Within old growth stands that occur in the Subalpine biophysical setting and contain substantial amounts of shade intolerant species (e.g., western Montana Zone Old Growth Type 5 and 6 with whitebark pine and/or western larch), prescribed fire alone or in combination with the cutting of smaller trees could be used to emulate a non-lethal or mixed-severity wildfire that occasionally occurred on these sites historically, and that served to extend the time that shade intolerant whitebark pine or western larch could maintain their presence in stands that would otherwise become dominated by shade tolerant species (e.g., subalpine fir, Englemann spruce or mountain hemlock).

For examples 1-3 above, if cutting smaller trees is needed and the removal of the cut trees is necessary to meet the site-specific restoration objectives, then timber harvest may be proposed. The modified stand structure and fuel complex that results from the activities described in the examples above could increase the resistance of the large trees to potential mortality from disturbances and/or stressors (e.g., high intensity wildfire, bark beetle attacks, and/or potential climate change impacts such as more frequent or intense droughts).

**Example 4:** For the old growth types that are noted above in examples 1-3, another action that could be taken in some circumstances to increase the resistance and resiliency of the old growth stands is to use natural, unplanned fire ignitions for the same general purposes as noted above. However, because it is more difficult to predict and control the intensity, severity and size of fires that result from unplanned ignitions, the potential benefits of using this tool in a specific circumstance would be carefully weighed against the risks.

**Example 5:** Other examples of activities that could be used in old growth stands or adjacent to old growth stands to increase resistance and resiliency may include treatments for non-native invasive plants, small scale tree planting of blister rust resistant white pine seedlings in openings within old growth stands that are created from wildfires, using anti-aggregate pheromones to prevent or minimize the loss of susceptible trees to bark beetle attacks or raking away the unnatural accumulation of bark debris from underneath ponderosa pine trees prior to prescribe burning to minimize potential tree mortality.

In regard to the scientific basis for the potential need to conduct the type of vegetation treatments that are described above, the following discussion cites relevant literature. Treatments in the drier forest types would allow the ability to improve the resiliency, resulting in stands more able to withstand bark beetle mortality and stand-replacing fire (Agee and Skinner 2005, Fettig et al. 2008). Restoring forest composition and structure before wildfires occur should allow fire to play its characteristic role in maintaining ecosystem structure and function in the forest (Noss et al. 2006, Johnson and Franklin 2007). Whether restoration should focus on ecological processes (e.g., fire), or re-establishing forest structure, to reincorporate natural disturbance processes in managed ecosystems, continues to be debated (Stephens and Moghaddas 2005). However, in the meantime, dry old growth forest types are at high risk from wildfire, due to increasingly dense understories composed of drought- and fire-intolerant species that have created ladder fuels, as

well as increases in ground fuels and in main canopy densities (Agee and Skinner 2005, Hessburg et al. 2005, Noss et al. 2006, Spies et al. 2006, Abella et al. 2007, Brinkley et al. 2007, Egan 2007, Fiedler et al. 2007a, Johnson 2007).

Management options for creating or restoring a fire-resilient forest structure within the drier forest types includes the reduction of surface and ladder fuels and canopy bulk density and the maintenance of large thick bark trees in the stand (Agee and Skinner 2005). All of these structural characteristics significantly changed after decades of vigorous fire exclusion, which was facilitated by a moderate climate between 1930 and 1980 (Morgan et al. 2008). Several studies show that increasing forest resilience can be accomplished with various silvicultural treatments (Fiedler 2002, Agee and Skinner 2005, Stephens and Moghaddas 2005, Metlen and Fiedler 2006, Youngblood et al. 2006, Fettig et al. 2008, Ritchie et al. 2008, Zhang et al. 2008, Fulé et al. 2012). Specifically, thinning combined with prescribed underburning, compared with no treatment, was considered the most effective strategy, while prescribed burning alone could scorch and kill many of the old trees intended for retention (reviewed in Kolb et al. 2007, Ritchie et al. 2008).

The desired result of developing resilient old growth conditions through management techniques is to meet restoration objectives while maintaining composition and structure that conforms to the Green et al old growth definition (Green et al. 1992). Based on the current literature, this approach to maintaining resilience in old growth ecosystems has been incorporated into all the action alternatives (e.g., Hawe and Delong 1997, Fiedler 2000b, Quesnel and Steeger 2002, Steeger and Quesnel 2003, Briana et al. 2004, Lindh and Muir 2004, Sala and Callaway 2004, Spies et al. 2006, Kolb et al. 2007, Ritchie et al. 2008, Zhang et al. 2008, Elzinga and Shearer 1997, Arno et al. 1997, Harrington 2007, Erickson et al. 2008).

### *Snags*

Snags (standing dead trees) are ecologically important for a number of reasons. They are important habitat structures (for nesting, feeding, perching, and/or roosting) for a wide variety of wildlife species. They provide substrate for some mosses and lichens and also serve to improve environmental conditions on harsh sites. Once they fall, snags become down wood that provides habitat structures (including den sites) for a different and very wide suite of wildlife and some plant species. Down wood is also critical for nutrient cycling, moisture retention, providing effective microsites for tree regeneration, diversity of soil micro-organisms, and hydrologic function. Snags are short-term and vary greatly throughout the life cycle of a forest stand. If a stand originates following a fire, the resulting young stand may begin under a high number of snags. Most snags only remain standing for a few years, but can remain standing up to a few decades. How long these snags remain standing is a function of the species, size, age, and site factors like soil characteristics, slope position, and landscape position. An insect or disease outbreak may rapidly increase the number of snags. A severe windstorm may rapidly reduce the number of snags (while increasing the amount of down wood). Root pathogens may provide a gradual creation of snags until all the trees are killed. Depending on the particular pathogen, these snags may not remain standing for very long. Various severe weather conditions may serve either to increase or decrease snag numbers.

In order to quantify and otherwise describe the existing snags on the KNF, an analysis was recently completed using FIA information collected on the Forest (Bollenbacher et al. 2009b). Table 10 provides a summary of the estimated average number and size distribution of snags per acre that occur across the forested areas of the KNF. The information is separated by Dominance Group, Habitat Type Group, and three snag sizes. The three Habitat Type Groups correspond

very closely to the Biophysical Settings (warm/dry, warm/moist and subalpine) presented earlier. The Lodgepole Pine Dominance Group was separated from the other Dominance Groups in the analysis since lodgepole pine trees do not grow as large as the other common tree species because of their growth form and high stocking levels, and typically do not contain as many large snags.

Snag numbers decrease substantially in the larger size classes across all Habitat Type Groups and Dominance Groups (table 10). The Low-Mid Elevation-Moist group has the highest average snag densities across all snag classes. This is likely due to the presence of higher productivity sites and because of the specific fire regime typical on these sites compared to the other Habitat Type Groups. That is, a longer interval between stand-replacing fires occurs while mixed-severity fires occur in-between the stand-replacing events.

To determine historic snag densities, the snag analysis (Bollenbacher et al. 2009) separated the forest inventory data into two categories; areas that occurred in wilderness or roadless areas, and the rest of the Forest. The assumption was that snag levels and distribution patterns in the wilderness/roadless areas provide a better “picture” of historic snag conditions, and represent the best available information as to the historic range and distribution of snags. This information was then used to establish desired future conditions and forest plan guidance. Although fire suppression activities may have influenced snag conditions in the wilderness/roadless areas in a number of ways, the effects are difficult to predict (Bollenbacher et al. 2009, Harris 1999). In a recent snag study (Harris 1999) that took place in western Montana, Harris considered how fire suppression activities may have influenced snag levels in areas that had no harvest history. Harris stated that predicting the likely effects was complex and uncertain. However, he did conclude that existing snag densities in his study area may be about 10 percent higher than historical levels.

**Table 10. Average Snags per Acre for the entire KNF by Dominance Group, Habitat Type Group, and Snag Sizes Classes**

Dominance Group	Habitat Type Group	Snags per Acre 10"+	Snags per Acre 15"+	Snags per Acre 20"+
All except Lodgepole pine	Dry	6.8	2.2	0.7
	Low Mid Elev-Moist	11.7	4.1	1.5
	Subalpine	14.4	3.2	0.9
Lodgepole Pine	All Settings	9.6	1.4	0.3

Data in this table is a summary of the more detailed information within table 5 of appendix C in Bollenbacher et al. 2009. Confidence intervals and the number of plots per strata are available in that document.

Average snag densities for wilderness/roadless areas and the other forested lands are displayed in table 11. As this table indicates, the average snag densities in the wilderness/roadless areas are greater than those outside of those areas. However, when one compares the confidence intervals surrounding those averages, the differences are only statistically significant for the 15 inches plus snag class.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is illustrated in table 2 of Bollenbacher et al. 2009.

**Table 11. Average Snags per Acre on the KNF for Areas within Wilderness/Roadless Areas and for the Areas outside of those Designations**

Area	Snags per Acre 10"+	Snags per Acre 15"+	Snags per Acre 20"+
In Wilderness/Roadless Areas	12.6	3.9	1.1
Outside of Wilderness/Roadless Areas	9.8	2.4	0.8

Data in this table is a summary of the more detailed information within table 2 in Bollenbacher et al. 2009 Confidence intervals and the number of plots per strata are available in that document.

Table 12 below displays the range and average number of snags that occur in the wilderness/roadless areas on the KNF by Habitat Type and Dominance Groups. These snag densities are the desired amounts in the revised Forest Plan.

**Table 12. Snag Density Ranges and Averages for Wilderness/Roadless Areas on the KNF by Habitat Type and Dominance Groups (average snags are displaced in parentheses)**

Dominance Group	Habitat Type Group	Ranges of Snags per Acre by Diameter Class		
		10"+	15"+	20"+
All except Lodgepole pine	Dry	3.3-15.9 (6.8)	1.0-6.1 (2.2)	0.3-2.2 (0.7)
	Low Mid Elev-Moist	6.3-17.1 (11.7)	2.4-7.2 (4.1)	0.5-2.6 (1.5)
	Subalpine	11.1-25.1 (14.4)	2.9-6.5 (3.2)	0.5-2.1 (0.9)
Lodgepole Pine	All Settings	3.6-14.0 (9.1)	0.5-4.3 (1.2)	0.1-1.1 (0.3)

Data in this table is from the KNF portion of table 11 in Bollenbacher et al. (2009)

As found in both Bollenbacher et al. (2009) and Harris (1999), the distribution of snags across the landscapes in both northern Idaho and western Montana is very clumpy, or uneven. For example, when analyzing snag distributions on several national forests in western Montana (Kootenai, Flathead, Lolo, and Bitterroot National Forests), Bollenbacher et al. (2009) found that the percent of FIA plots having any snags occurring on them, varied from approximately 2 to 32 percent, depending upon the habitat type, Dominance groups, and snag class.<sup>1</sup> The conclusion is that over a lot of area, there are no snags, while other areas have numerous snags. The primary reason for this uneven distribution of snags across the landscape is simply that many snags are created as a result of periodic, broad-and fine-scale disturbances such as fire, insects, and diseases; and these disturbances do not occur evenly across space.

Bollenbacher et al. (2009) also looked at how snags and live tree densities varied across different seral stages of forest development. This analysis was used to determine the appropriate levels for retention of snags and live snag recruitment for vegetative treatments. In the analysis, size class was used to approximate seral stages. Areas that were dominated by trees that were 0.0-9.9 inches in diameter (up to 30 years old) were considered early-seral, while areas dominated by 10.0 -19.9 inch diameter trees were considered to be in a mid-seral stage. Finally, areas dominated by trees 20.0 inches and greater were considered to be in the late-seral stage (generally 130 or more years old).

<sup>1</sup> See table 9 in Bollenbacher et al. (2009) for more details.



Table 13 illustrates the ranges and average number of snags and live trees that occur within each of the three seral stages by Habitat Type and Dominance Groups. Information in this table is for wilderness/roadless areas across all of the western Montana national forests. This information was used to develop the snag guideline in the revised Forest Plan that indicates how many snags and live trees (for future snag recruitment) should generally be left in areas that have vegetation management activities conducted in them.

The desired snag quantities and sizes are provided in the revised Forest Plan by biophysical setting, Dominance Group and size class. The desired condition over the Forest approximates the conditions in table 12 that currently occur in the roadless/unroaded areas.

**Table 13. Snags and Live Trees per Acre Ranges by Seral Stage and Diameter Class**

Dominance Group	Habitat Type Group	Ranges per acre in Early-seral Conditions		
		Snags > 15"+ DBH	Snags > 20.0" DBH	Live trees > 15.0" DBH
All Other Groups	Dry	1.6 - 3.6 (2.5)	0.5 - 1.2 (0.8)	1.7 - 3.8 (2.7)
	Low and Mid Elevation Moist	3.7 - 8.3 (5.9)	0.9 - 2.8 (1.8)	1.5 - 4.7 (3.0)
	Subalpine	3.8 - 5.3 (4.6)	1.0 - 1.6 (1.3)	1.7 - 2.6 (2.2)
Lodgepole Pine	All	0.6 - 1.5 (1.0)	0.1 - 0.4 (0.2)	0.5 - 1.2 (0.8)
Dominance Group	Habitat Type Group	Ranges per acre in Mid-seral Conditions		
		Snags > 15"+ DBH	Snags > 20.0" DBH	Live trees > 15.0" DBH
All Other Groups	Dry	0.7-2.5 (1.6)	0.1-0.8 (0.4)	9.6-16.3 (12.8)
	Low and Mid Elevation Moist	2.8 - 7.6 (5.0)	0.3 - 1.8 (1.0)	10.0 - 20.7 (15.2)
	Subalpine	3.0 - 4.7 (3.8)	0.7-1.4 (1.0)	9.9 - 13.0 (11.4)
Lodgepole Pine	All	0.6 - 1.5 (1.0)	0.1 - 0.4 (0.2)	3.8 - 6.8 (5.2)
Dominance Group	Habitat Type Group	Ranges per acre in Late-seral Conditions		
		Snags > 15"+ DBH	Snags > 20.0" DBH	Live trees > 15.0" DBH
All Other Groups	Dry	1.8 - 5.0 (3.2)	0.6 - 1.7 (1.1)	22.2 - 30.3 (26.1)
	Low and Mid Elevation Moist	3.3 - 13.1 (7.7)	1.2 - 5.9 (3.4)	31.2 - 54.0 (42.3)
	Subalpine	5.4 - 8.8 (7.0)	1.6 - 2.8 (2.2)	29.3 - 36.3 (32.8)
Lodgepole Pine	All			

Estimated mean for each range is displayed in parentheses. Seral stage is based on Stand Size as derived by basal area weighted average diameter: early-seral = 0.0 - 4.9" average diameter; mid-seral = 5.0" - 14.9" average diameter; late-seral = 15.0" + average diameter

Information in this table was taken from table 12 in Bollenbacher et al. (2009)

### *Forest Density*

The density of forest vegetation can influence everything from the health and vigor of individual trees in a forest stand to the composition of plant species in the community, which affects whether or not the stand is suitable habitat for certain wildlife species. Tree density also affects the susceptibility of the trees to drought, insects and diseases, wildfires, and other disturbance events, as well as influencing the rate of plant succession. While it is difficult to quantify

historical forest densities, general inferences can be made based on the knowledge of historical disturbance regimes and forest succession.

As discussed in the “Wildfire” disturbance section, the success of fire suppression has had a large influence on the structure and composition of forest conditions. Research has shown that fire suppression for the last several decades has led to increased density of stands (Keane et al. 2002). Fire exclusion has led to stands that are much denser than occurred historically.

There are a number of key ecological concerns with the trend of increasing forest density. In general, the denser the forest the greater the likelihood that fuel characteristics could support a fast moving intense crown fire. This is not only a result of greater fuel quantities in a dense forest, but also of the vertical and horizontal continuity of fuels. On most of the sites where fire suppression and other factors have led to increased forest densities, not only has the number of trees per area increased, but so has the number of canopy layers in a given stand. This has increased the continuity of vertical fuels. The lower tree and tall shrub canopies serve as ladder fuels to increase the likelihood of a surface fire moving upwards to become a crown fire.

The susceptibility of a forest to insects and diseases is heavily influenced by density and its impact on tree vigor. As the density increases, a deficit of soil moisture develops and trees lose their ability to withstand attacks by insects, pathogens, and parasites (Powell 1999, Safranyik et al. 1998). Density-related tree mortality from insects, diseases, and competition leads to increased dead fuel quantities and higher fuel hazards.

Another concern regarding the trend of increasing forest density is its influence on the more desirable tree species that are intolerant of shade. Western larch and ponderosa pine are very intolerant of shade. In a stand with mixed species, as the density of more shade-tolerant species (e.g., Douglas-fir, grand fir, hemlock, and cedar) increase, the larch and ponderosa pine will likely die out (unless a disturbance reduces the competition from the shade-tolerant species).

Climate change may compound the effect of dense forests on the soil water balance. In general, the soil water balance (especially in the summer drought period) determines which tree species can ultimately survive on a specific site. Seral tree species (e.g., ponderosa pine and western larch) have the unique ability to establish on bare soil surfaces where high surface temperatures exclude other species. One of the adaptations of these seral species are deep rooting characteristics that allows the tree to find an adequate water supply and avoid extensive competition with shallow and fibrous rooted grasses and forbs. As the shade from these seral tree species limits grasses and forbs, shade-tolerant tree species can become established in understories. These shade-tolerant species have shallower rooting characteristics that allow them to gather soil water from near the soil surface. The overall rooting structure on the site becomes much more competitive for water resources as succession progresses. As the density of the stand and the amount of leaf area increases, water transpiration increases and this can deplete the water that is stored in the soil throughout the summer. The additional forest canopy interception of rain and snow further compounds the reduction in soil water recharge. This results in a water-stressed forest that not only becomes more susceptible to insect and disease, but also more prone to supporting severe wildfires because live fuel moisture is relatively low.

#### *Landscape Patterns of Forest Conditions and Disturbance Implications*

To understand how forest ecosystems function and how management activities could affect them, it is important to consider the pattern of forests on the landscape. The pattern of a forest can affect numerous ecological processes, including: watershed functioning; wildlife habitat and

dispersal; plant habitat and dispersal; disturbance (fire, insects, and pathogens) risk, spread and size; ecosystem response to disturbance; and human esthetic values. The numerous ecosystem services that forests provide are heavily influenced by the spatial patterns that exist on the landscape (Turner et al 2012).

The historic and current forest pattern of size classes on the KNF was analyzed through the use of a spatial pattern analysis model called FRAGSTATS. This model was used to quantify the extent and spatial configuration of forest “patches” within a landscape. Patches were identified and then classified into tree size classes. The model then calculated a number of spatial metrics. The methods used for the analysis are described in appendix B of this EIS.

Relative to the historical conditions, the following conclusions were made regarding how the spatial pattern of structural conditions has changed over representative landscapes on the KNF. Forest stands in the smallest size class, as well as those in the largest size class, changed in similar ways. The area covered by both of these size classes declined from historical levels (see figure 8 above). The FRAGSTATS analysis also indicated that the average patch size of stands in these size classes decreased substantially. The smaller-sized patches have an increase in edge and decrease in interior habitat; therefore, these types of patches have become more fragmented. In addition, the size of these patches became less variable. Although the average patch size for both the smallest size class as well as the largest size class showed similar trends, the magnitude of the changes were generally greater for the largest size class.

Changes that have occurred to the medium size class have generally been in the opposite direction to those described above. The medium size class became a larger percent of the landscape and the average patch size generally became much bigger. In addition, the patch sizes became more variable.

The FRAGSTATS analysis concluded that overall, there has been a homogenization and simplification of landscape patterns for forest structure. Landscapes have increasingly become dominated by large patches of medium size trees and there is less variability in internal structure or composition of these medium size patches. Meanwhile, the patches of the smallest and largest size classes are fragmented into smaller patches with more edge and less interior area.

Other assessments have been conducted to investigate how the pattern of other forest characteristics (e.g., forest cover types, crown cover, snags, tree density, etc.) has changed over time, and how those changes may have influenced the susceptibility of the forests to insect and disease disturbances. For example, as part of the ICBEMP effort, a midscale assessment was conducted to determine how the cumulative changes in forest composition, structure, and pattern have affected the vulnerability of the forest to insects, diseases, and wildfires (Hessburg et al. 1999, Hessburg et al. 2000). As part of that assessment, several subwatersheds that occur on the KNF (Yaak) were analyzed. Conclusions made that are applicable to those watersheds regarding how the landscape pattern has changed regarding insect susceptibility include:

- Areas dominated by lodgepole pine forests have aged and become more synchronous in their vulnerability to mountain pine beetles and fires;
- The lodgepole pine exhibited larger tree size, poorer crown differentiation, higher crown cover, and greater contiguity of those characteristics;
- There are greater areas vulnerable to fir engraver bark beetles; and
- The area and connectivity of forests that is vulnerable to spruce beetles has increased.

For root diseases, the changes in the forest has generally increased the vulnerability to armillaria, annosum, and laminated root diseases (as well tomentosus and butt rots). With regard to wildfires and smoke production, changes to forest conditions were such that a larger percentage of the landscapes would burn with greater intensities and produce more smoke than historically. The fuel loading, predicted fuel consumption, and expected smoke production estimates generally increased as did the intensity, flame length, and crown fire potential. However, Hessburg et al. (2000) concludes that management activities have not made entire landscapes prone to uncharacteristic wildfires, but rather they have removed the spatial isolation that patches of forests prone to stand replacement fires once exhibited.

Changes to the landscape pattern have occurred largely as a result of a cool phase of the Pacific decadal oscillation between 1940 to 1980 (which helped make fire suppression effective until the warm phase of the Pacific decadal oscillation became dominant in the late 1980s through 2007). There is a growing body of evidence that the types of changes to landscape patterns and conditions discussed above have increased the susceptibility of the forests to larger and/or different kinds of disturbances, especially when considered in light of the potential climate change effects.

Bark beetle outbreaks generally occur in areas where there is a large expanse of forest with fairly homogenous conditions of host tree species of a susceptible age/condition (Fettig et al. 2007, Samman and Logan 2000). On portions of the KNF, the hazard of significant mortality from either mountain pine beetle or Douglas-fir beetle is fairly high as a result of having these conditions. For these bark beetles (as well as other species), the severity of outbreaks and tree mortality can be reduced in extent by increasing the diversity of stand ages, size classes, and tree species in landscapes that are homogenous (Bentz et al. 2010, Bollenbacher 2010, Fettig et al. 2007).

As the fuels and forest structures have homogenized over the landscapes, the potential for large, high-intensity wildfires has increased, and climate change effects will likely exasperate this trend (USDA Forest Service 2010b). Research has shown that the spread of wildfires and the potential for large fire growth across a landscape can be limited by reducing fuel continuity (Ager et al. 2010, Collins et al. 2008, Finney and Cohen 2003, Finney 2007, Hessburg et al. 2007, Safford et al. 2009, Stephens et al. 2009). In addition, large landscapes (e.g., wilderness areas) where wildfires have been allowed to burn can develop fuel heterogeneity; therefore, future fires could be limited in size relative to other landscapes that have more homogeneity in fuel conditions (Bollenbacher 2010, Collins et al. 2008, Rollins et al. 2002, and van Wageningen 2004). In addition, patterns of old burns can delay and detour the spread of new fires.

#### *Promoting Resistance and Resiliency to Disturbance and Stress Agents*

Numerous changes have occurred to the forest on the KNF relative to historical conditions. To various degrees and in different ways, these changes have affected the composition, structure, landscape pattern, and ecological processes. These altered conditions have predisposed the Forest to new levels and types of disturbances (e.g., uncharacteristic fires as well as both native and non-native insects and diseases). From the perspective of maintaining biodiversity and healthy forest ecosystems, these trends are not desirable. In addition, future climate change will add to the list of existing forest “stressors.”

Forest ecologists and other scientists are increasingly noting that “resistance” and “resilience” are important concepts as they relate to sustainability, biodiversity, and climate change (Blate et al. 2009, Drever et al. 2006, Folke et al. 2004, Hansen et al. 2003, Joyce et al. 2008, Millar et al.

2007, Noss 2001, Stephens et al. 2010, Thompson et al. 2009, Unnasch et al. 2009, Walker et al. 2004, Walker and Salt 2006). Resistance refers to the capacity of ecosystems to tolerate disturbances without exhibiting significant change in structure and composition, while resilience refers to the ability of a system to recover from disturbance in the event that the disturbance exceeds the capacity of the system to resist changing (Holling 1973). To improve adaptation of forest vegetation to the likely effects of climate change, these same researchers suggest promoting resistance and resiliency. Reducing the impact of current stressors has been called a “...no regrets adaptation strategy that could be taken now to help enhance ecosystem resilience to climate change, at least in the near term” (Joyce et al. 2008). Joyce goes on to explain that “[e]fforts to address the existing stressors would address current management needs, allow an incremental approach that begins to incorporate climate into management and planning, and potentially reduce the future interactions of these stressors with climate change.”

Adaptations options are presented in the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b), “...emphasize management actions that address existing stressors, contribute to multiple land management objectives regardless of climate change (win-win), and are likely to be effective at achieving or maintaining desired conditions across a wide range of future climates. Their application in appropriate circumstances may be a critical contribution to sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of the KNF to meet the needs of present and future generations.” One of these options is to:

Increase the resilience of forest vegetation by reducing the potential severity of wildfire and insect outbreaks. Managing the density of trees can improve forest resiliency by reducing water stress, decreasing susceptibility to insect and disease mortality, and decreasing the likelihood of stand-replacing wildfires. Management actions that increase the diversity of stand ages, size classes, and tree species in currently homogenous landscapes can reduce the extent and severity of bark beetle outbreaks and wildland fires. Mechanical treatments, prescribed fire, and managing wildland fires for resource objectives are all potential tools for increasing the resiliency of forest vegetation to climate and other stressors. In addition, existing programs to reduce the vulnerability of whitebark pine and western white pine to white pine blister rust will also improve the resistance of these species to the added stresses associated with climate change.

When developing the goals, desired future conditions, objectives and standards in the Forest Plan that pertain to forest vegetation, the concepts and management approaches discussed above regarding forest resistance and resiliency were utilized with the overall objective of maintaining and restoring the Forest biodiversity and sustainability. In discussions in this EIS regarding forest vegetation, we consider that a resilient forest ecosystem contains the diversity of composition, size, density and pattern to enable it to cope with disturbance and to perpetuate itself through periodic regeneration.

### *Carbon Sequestration*

Carbon sequestration is the process by which atmospheric carbon dioxide is taken up by vegetation through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass (trunks, branches, foliage, and roots) and soils. Forests also release carbon dioxide to the atmosphere as a result of respiration and decay of dead wood, litter, and organic matter in soils. In addition, forest fires release some stored carbon into the atmosphere in the combustion process, and insect outbreaks, fires, pathogens, drought stress, and wind storms kill trees and increase the amount of biomass

available for decomposition by microorganisms. Timber harvesting removes carbon from the forest, although some of it is stored in wood products or used to produce energy – displacing fossil fuel use.

Sequestering carbon in forest ecosystems can help to offset sources of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, such as deforestation, forest fires, and fossil fuel emissions. Interest in carbon sequestration has increased in an effort to explore opportunities for climate change mitigation. The KIPZ Climate Change Report provides a substantial amount of information on how terrestrial vegetation and disturbance processes can affect carbon cycles as well as forest productivity. The KNF and IPNF contribute approximately six tenths to eight tenths of 1 percent of the total U.S. forest carbon “reservoir.” Estimated carbon stocks on forested areas of the KNF are approximately 171 million metric tons. In addition, preliminary estimates indicate that the forests on the KNF and IPNF currently serve as a net carbon sink, removing approximately 27 to 31 metric tons of carbon per acre per year. Harvested wood products increase the net sequestration on those forests by an undetermined amount. See the KIPZ Climate Change Report, for more detailed information on carbon sequestration.

On the KNF, carbon stocks will vary over coming decades in response to complex and uncertain interactions between climate variability and change, age structure, disturbance-recovery processes, and possible effects of carbon dioxide concentrations on forest productivity. High severity fires or large scale tree mortality from bark beetles will affect the amount of carbon sequestered by the KNF. An increase in root disease, with its associated limitation on the growth of stands, could lead to a reduction in the ability of the Forest to store carbon. In addition, timber harvesting will affect amount of carbon stored and the short-term net flux of carbon with the atmosphere.

#### *Desired and Current Vegetation Conditions for Each Biophysical Setting*

As described earlier, the KNF is comprised of three major biophysical settings: Warm/Dry; Warm/Moist; and Subalpine. Following is a description of the vegetation condition for each biophysical setting. The desired condition is first described in a narrative format for each setting and then the current forest composition and structure is compared to the desired condition using Dominance Groups and size class figures.

#### **Warm/Dry Composition, Structure, and Pattern**

This biophysical setting includes the warmest and driest forest sites that support forest vegetation. These sites cover approximately 22 percent of the KNF forested lands and occur either at low elevations, at mid-elevations on southerly aspects, and/or on droughty soils (figure 6).

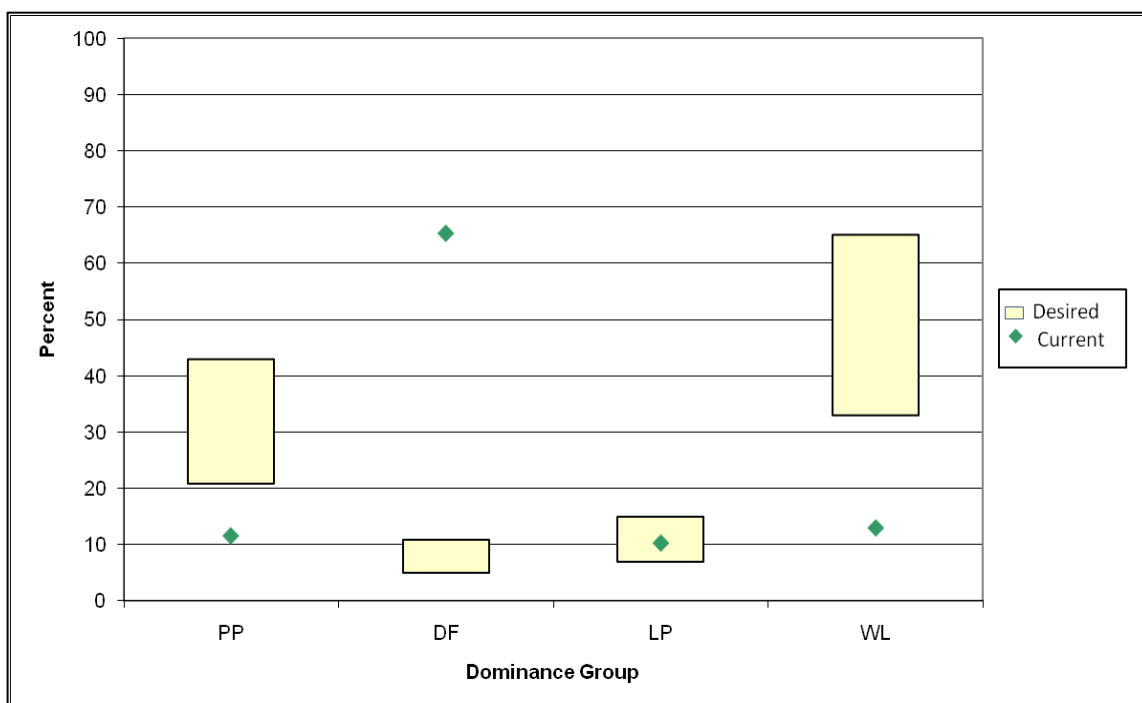
On the driest sites in this setting (vegetation response units 1 and the south and west aspects of unit 2), the stands are generally open-grown and park-like, containing abundant large-diameter ponderosa pine and lesser amounts of large-diameter Douglas-fir. Openings are generally less than five acres and occur within 20 to 200 acre patches. Stands are usually multi-aged and have a low tree density of 5 to 30 large mature trees per acre that are irregularly spaced in the stand.

On the moister sites within this setting (vegetation response units 3 and north and east aspects of unit 2), species composition varies with mixed Douglas-fir-western larch-ponderosa pine stands more prevalent on the moist end, and mixed ponderosa pine-Douglas-fir stands occurring on drier sites. At maturity, densities of trees generally vary from 15 to 60 trees per acre. However, on the moister sites, the tree density can exceed 100 trees per acre. The pattern for these

landscapes is a mosaic with small to moderate size openings (less than 5 acres up to 10 acres) within larger patches (50 to 200 acres).

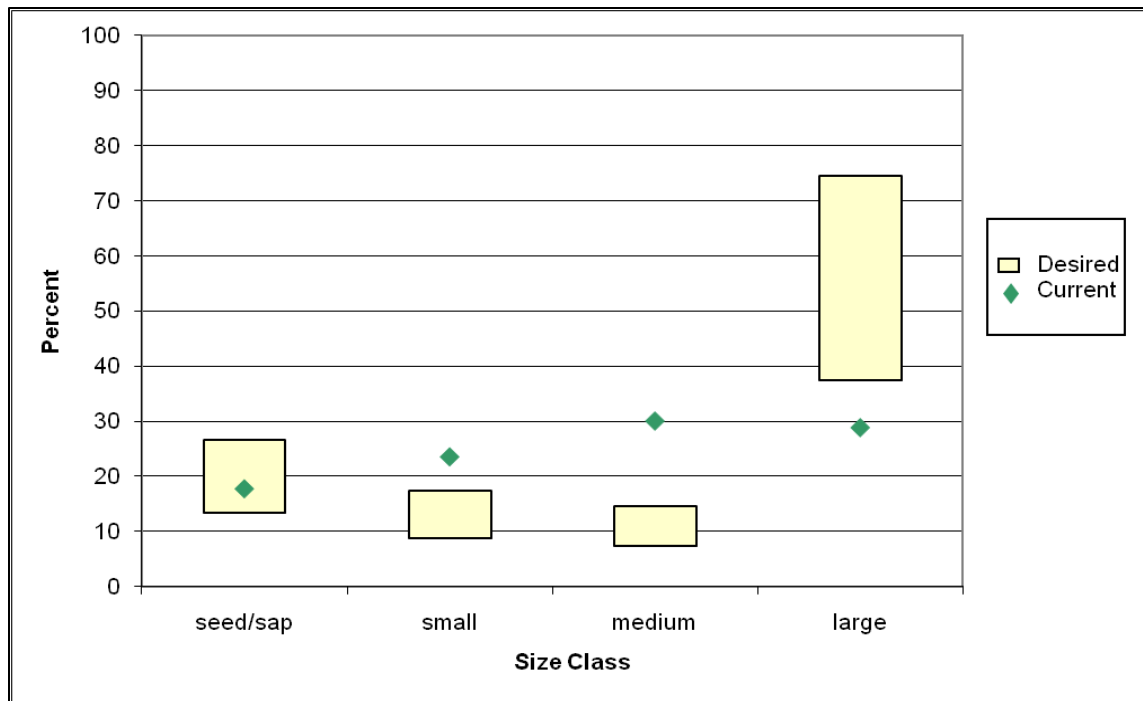
The pattern of successional stages in this warm/dry setting is such that fire or insects and diseases do not dominate the landscape at any one time. As the Forest trends towards the desired conditions, uncharacteristic levels of bark beetles, root disease, and fire intensity, decrease over time.

Figure 10 shows current species composition and desired ranges for the dominance groups found in this biophysical setting. As indicated in figure 10, ponderosa pine and western larch are well below desired conditions, while Douglas-fir is well above. The desire is to increase the amount of ponderosa pine and western larch while decreasing Douglas-fir.



PP = ponderosa pine; DF = Douglas-fir; LP = lodgepole pine; and WL = western larch

**Figure 10. Desired and Current Forest Composition by Dominance Group for the warm/dry Biophysical Setting**



(seed/sap= 0-5" DBH trees, small=5-10" DBH trees, medium=10-15" DBH trees, and large=>15" DBH trees.)

**Figure 11. Vegetation Desired Condition and Current Vegetation for Size Class for the warm/dry Biophysical Setting**

Figure 11 shows current amounts and desired ranges of size classes for this biophysical setting. As indicated in figure 11, the large size class is below desired conditions, while small and medium size classes are above. Seedling/saplings are at the low end of their desired range. The desire is to increase the amount of large and seedling/sapling size classes while reducing the amount of small and medium size classes.

### Warm/Moist Composition, Structure, and Pattern

This biophysical setting includes moist forest sites that are relatively warm. Approximately 37 percent of KNF forested lands are within this biophysical setting. This setting includes low-elevation upland sites with deeper soils on north and east aspects, extensive mid-elevation moist upland sites, and most low-and mid-elevation wet stream bottoms and riparian benches and toe-slopes.

On the drier aspects, early-seral tree species such as western larch and western white pine, and in some cases Douglas-fir (where root disease risk is low), dominate throughout all successional structural stages. Other tree species occur in smaller quantities, including grand fir, and in cooler locations, Engelmann spruce and lodgepole pine. On the dry end on warm exposures and/or well drained soils, ponderosa pine is a seral component. Stands generally have either a single-age class or have two-age classes. Stands having two-aged classes resemble mixed-severity fire conditions, usually with fire-tolerant western larch and Douglas-fir in the overstory. At maturity, stands have approximately 100 trees per acre and have canopy coverage of 60 percent or more. Stands dominated by western larch have a lower density, with 40 to 70 trees per acre and canopy coverage of 30 to 40 percent.

In the moderately cool and moist uplands, forests include a mixture dominated by early-seral shade-intolerants (e.g., western larch, western white pine, lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir), with

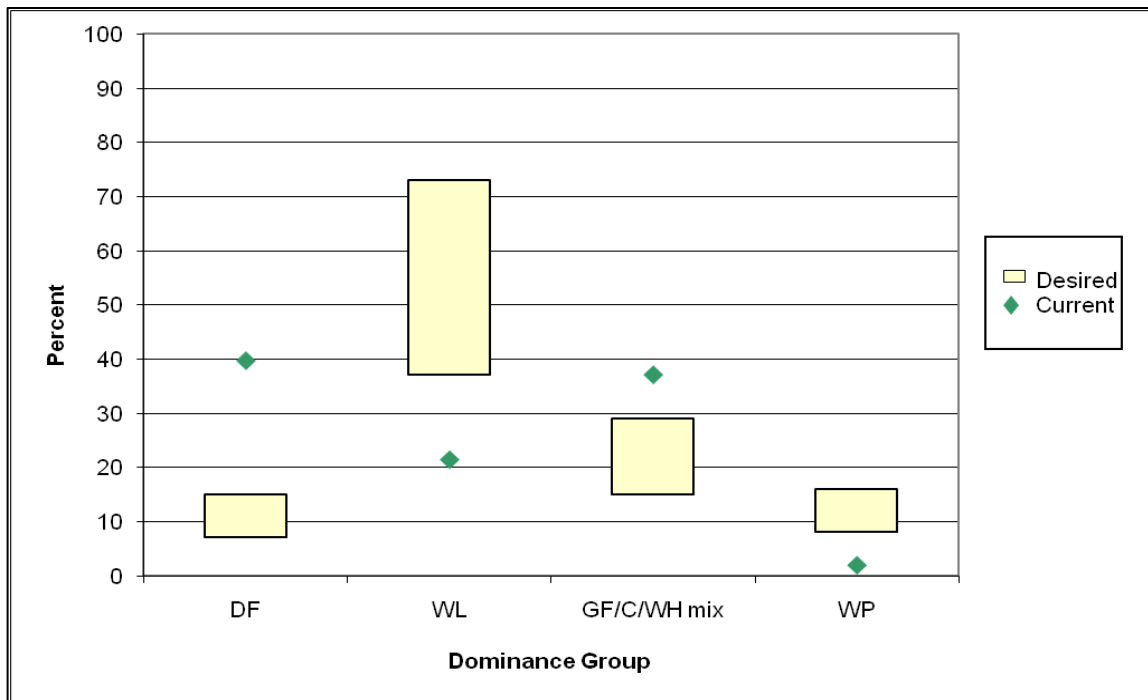


seral shade-tolerant species (e.g., grand fir, Engelmann spruce) and climax species forming a smaller proportion of the Forest. Single- and two-age class forests are desirable during early, middle-, and late-successional structural stages. Multi-storied forests increase in desirability when forests reach maturity. Desired stand density and canopy coverage are similar to desired conditions described above for the drier sites in the setting.

On wet sites, an abundance of large, old, mature forests occur and are often dominated by the climax western hemlock and western redcedar. High tree densities and canopy coverage of 70 percent or more exist through most successional structural stages. Mature stands support very large trees (often 30 to 50 inches in diameter), are open-grown and occasionally park-like in appearance, and are generally two- or multi-storied.

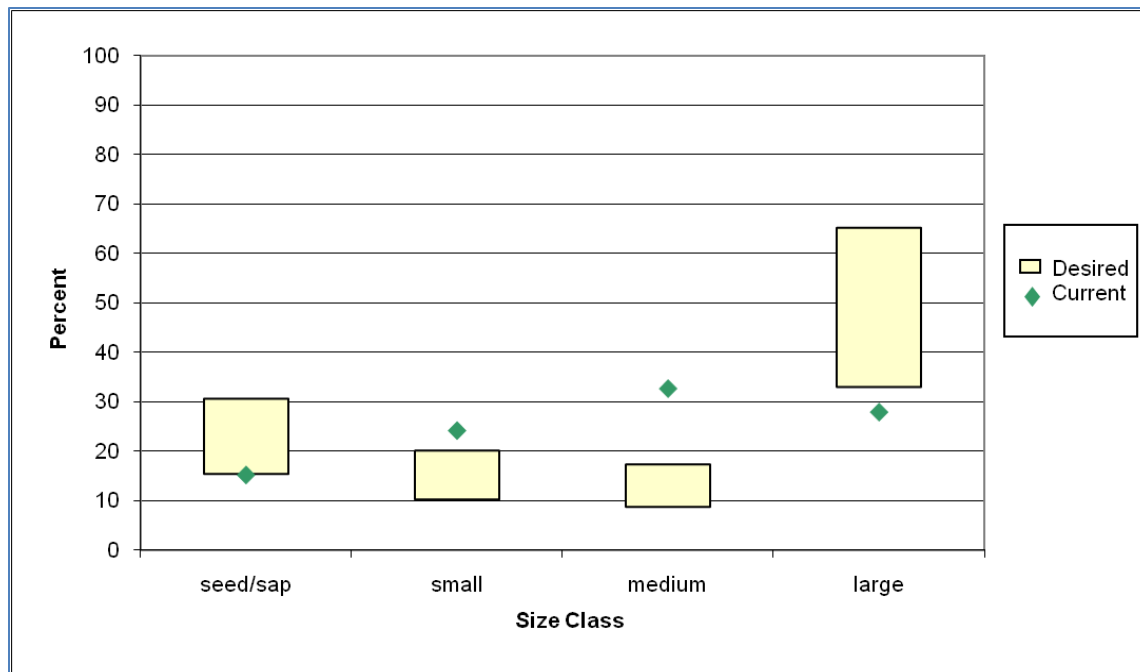
The resulting pattern for these landscapes is coarse and includes large, distinguishable patches, with residual structural diversity and heterogeneity both within and between patches. The pattern of successional stages is such that fire or insects and diseases do not dominate the landscape at any one time. As the Forest trends towards the desired conditions for this biophysical setting, uncharacteristic levels of root disease, bark beetles, and fire intensity would decrease over time.

Figure 12 shows current species composition and desired ranges for the dominance groups found in this biophysical setting. As indicated in figure 12, western larch and white pine are under-represented while Douglas-fir and grand fir/cedar/hemlock are over-represented. The desire is to increase the amount of western larch and white pine while decreasing Douglas-fir and grand fir/cedar/hemlock.



DF = Douglas-fir; WL = western larch; GF/C/WH mix = grand fir/cedar/western hemlock mix; WP = white pine

**Figure 12. Desired and Current Forest Composition by Dominance Type for the warm/moist Biophysical Setting**



(seed/sap = 0-5" DBH trees, small = 5-10" DBH trees, medium = 10-15" DBH trees, and large =>15" DBH trees.)

**Figure 13. Desired and Current Forest Structures by Size Classes for the warm/moist Biophysical Setting**

Figure 13 shows current amounts and desired ranges of size classes for this biophysical setting. As indicated in figure 13, the large and seedling/sapling size classes are below desired conditions, while small and medium size classes are above. The desire is to increase the amount of seedling/saplings and large size classes while reducing the amount of small and medium size classes.

### Subalpine Composition, Structure, and Pattern

This biophysical setting occurs over approximately 41 percent of the KNF forested lands and occupies the higher elevations of the Forest. This setting ranges from the cool and moist lower subalpine sites, up to the cold and dry high elevation sites that have more open forests.

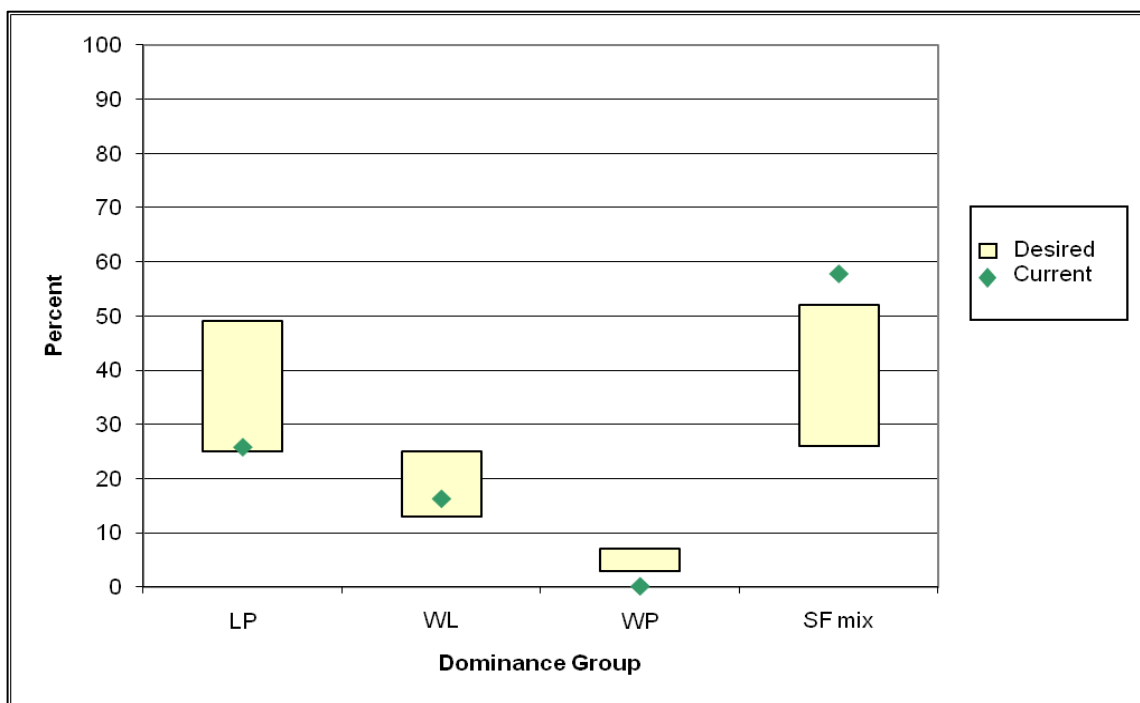
Western larch, western white pine, Engelmann spruce, and Douglas-fir are seral dominants, while lodgepole pine dominates areas less often in colder locations. Grand fir occurs on the warmer sites. Climax species, subalpine fir, and mountain hemlock also occur on cooler sites where fire-free intervals exceed the life span of lodgepole pine. Forests consist of two-aged forests (usually western larch/Douglas-fir in the overstory), and single-aged forests (seral mixed conifers, lodgepole, or spruce-dominated stands). Multi-aged stands are less common, but do exist with discrete age groups in older forests where several canopy layers exist. There are approximately 80 to 120 trees per acre at maturity and canopy coverage is 60 percent or more.

On high elevation sites in this biophysical setting, whitebark pine restoration efforts have increased the abundance of this species. Forests are low to moderate in density, and have conditions that would have been supported by mixed-severity fires. Other species include lodgepole pine, mountain hemlock, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce. Canopy coverage is generally less than 80 percent at maturity, much less at timberline sites. Forest conditions include numerous small openings (one-half to three acres in size) that are available for whitebark pine

regeneration. Multi-aged stands are desirable, predominately occurring in discrete age-class groups. At the seedling stage, the desirable numbers include at least 100 trees per acre of whitebark pine that have some blister rust resistance, with 30 to 80 trees per acre at maturity. At the extreme timberline sites, trees grow in clusters.

The resulting pattern for these landscapes includes a variety of patch sizes, with residual structural diversity and heterogeneity both within and between patches. In some locations in this subalpine setting, there are existing homogenous patches of extensive lodgepole pine-dominated forests in the medium and large size classes. These forests are very susceptible to large bark beetle outbreaks and/or wildfires. The desired condition is that the pattern of these areas be diversified. The pattern of successional stages is such that fire, insect, or diseases do not dominate the landscape at any one time.

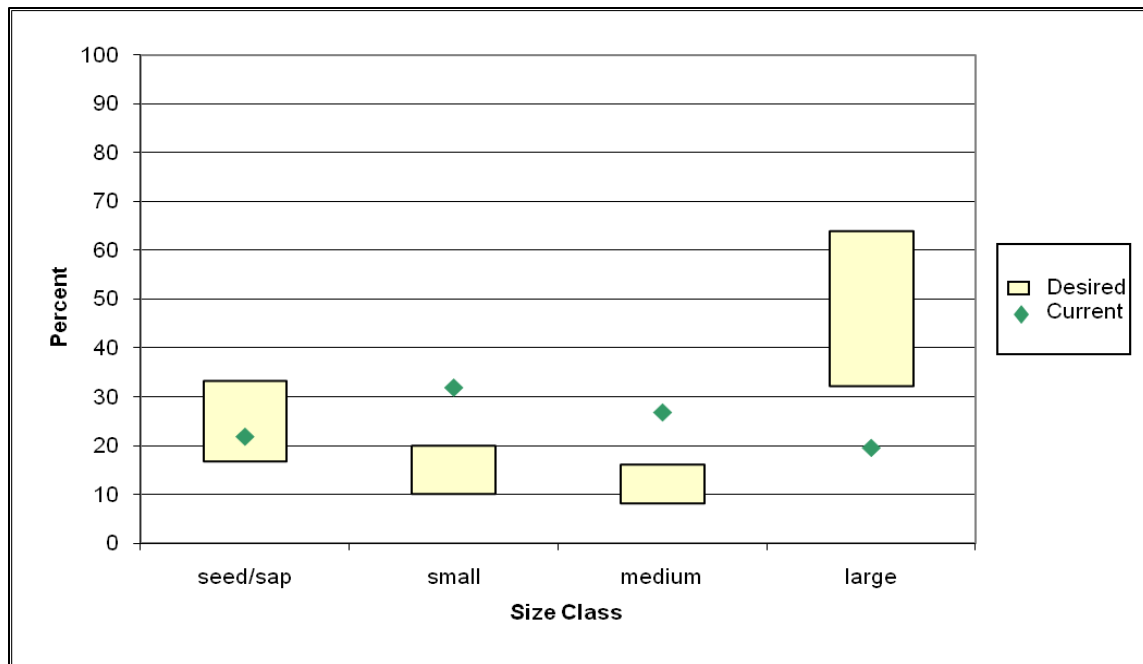
Figure 14 shows current species composition and desired ranges for the dominance groups found in this biophysical setting. As indicated in figure 14, white pine is below and western larch and lodgepole pine are at the bottom of their desired ranges while spruce/fir is above their desired range. The desire is to increase the amount of lodgepole pine, western larch and white pine while decreasing spruce/fir.



LP = lodgepole pine; WL = western larch; WP = white pine; SF mix = subalpine fir mix

**Figure 14. Desired and Current Forest Composition by Dominance Group for the Subalpine Biophysical Setting**

Figure 15 shows current amounts and desired ranges of size classes for this biophysical setting. As indicated in figure 15, the large size class is below desired conditions, while small and medium size classes are above. Seedling/saplings are at the low end of their desired range. The desire is to increase the amount of seedling/saplings and large size classes while reducing the amount of small and medium size classes.



(seed/sap = 0-5" DBH trees, small=5-10" DBH trees, medium =10-15" DBH trees, and large =>15" DBH trees.)

**Figure 15. Desired and Current Forest Structure by Size Classes for the Subalpine Biophysical Group**

## Environmental Consequences

### *Forest Vegetation*

The following discussion focuses on describing how forest vegetation would be affected by implementing the different alternatives. More specifically, the effects to forest composition, structure, landscape pattern, resistance and resiliency to disturbances and stress agents, and carbon sequestration will be addressed. For each topic and alternative, the relevant management direction is first summarized followed by the effects.

### *Forest Composition and Structure*

#### **Management Direction**

##### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

Alternative A would retain all of the 1987 Forest Plan direction regarding the management of forest vegetation. With regard to forest composition, the existing Forest Plan contains very little direction on the desired conditions for vegetation and management approaches to achieve them. Some direction is specifically targeted towards lodgepole pine (e.g., forestwide goal #16, timber objective #4, and a protection objective, p. II-10) with the intent to reduce the amount of stands on the KNF that are dominated by this species and that are in a susceptible condition to attacks by mountain pine beetle attacks.

The 1987 Forest Plan contains direction that addresses items related to forest structure. Some of these components are associated with the desire to have diverse age classes of forest stands for the purpose of maintaining the viability of all species (e.g., forestwide goal #7) or sufficient snags and replacement snags for snag-dependent species (e.g., forestwide goal #8 and wildlife and fish objective, p. II-7). There is some forestwide direction related to old growth (e.g.,

forestwide wildlife and fish objective p. II-7, forestwide standard, p. II-22) as well as an entire MA13 assigned to old growth. The old growth related MA contains a goal of maintaining a minimum of 10 percent (below 5,500 feet in elevation) of the land base within each drainage in old growth, with the type of old growth representing the major habitat types and species. MA13 contains numerous standards for old growth that relate to what kind of activities may or may not occur in old growth stands and what kind of fire suppression activities and strategies should be taken. In 1991, a supplement (supplement #85) for the KNF to Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2400 was developed to describe the process that the Forest would follow for the validation of old growth prior to any activities occurring that could affect old growth habitat.

As described in a number of the 1987 Forest Plan components as well as the final EIS for that Plan, activities related to timber management (e.g., timber harvesting, tree planting, pre-commercial tree thinning) were envisioned as the primary means that would be used to manage the Forest. For forest lands identified as suitable for timber production (approximately 56 percent of the total forested lands on the KNF) the objective was to manage those timber stands (with the exception of some old growth stands) with a “rotation age” of 80 to 120 years (i.e., the stands would be regenerated by a harvest at an interval of between 80 and 120 years). Although some of the MA prescriptions in the Plan allowed the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to help achieve Forest Plan goals and objectives, that tool has seldom been used since the Plan was adopted.

In addition to the direction described above that is only applicable to Alternative A, the following Plan direction is common to all alternatives and could potentially affect forest composition and structure. The “retained existing Forest Plan direction” (see chapter 1 and appendix C in the revised Plan for more information on this direction) in the revised Plan that could potentially affect the forest composition and structure includes the INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995), Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD) (USDA Forest Service 2007 March), and the Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (USDA Forest Service 2011 November (FSEIS)). All of this direction influences where vegetation management treatments can occur and/or what kind of treatments can be used, including prescribed fires and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives.

#### *Action Alternatives B Modified, C, and D*

Alternatives B Modified, C, and D contain forestwide goals (Goal-01) and desired conditions for both forest composition (FW-DC-VEG-01) and structure (FW-DC-VEG-02, 03, 04, 07, and 08). Desired forest composition and structure conditions are also provided for each of the three biophysical settings. Additional desired conditions for forest composition and structure are provided at the geographic area scale to address unique condition for individual GAs.

These alternatives also have forestwide objectives (FW-OBJ-VEG-01), standards (FW-STD-VEG-01, 02) and guidelines (FW-GDL-VEG-01, 02, 03, 04, 05, and 06) designed to move vegetation towards desired conditions.

These alternatives contain direction as to the desired role that fire (both prescribed fire and natural, unplanned ignitions) would have in affecting the forest composition and structure. For example, at the forestwide scale, a desired condition (FW-DC-FIRE-03) and two objectives (FW-OBJ-FIRE-01, 02) emphasize the desire to have fire play an increased role in trending the vegetation towards the desired conditions. In addition, many of the individual MAs contain similar direction on the role of fire.

As discussed above under the no-action alternative, the applicable “Retained Existing Forest Plan Direction” contains direction that will influence management of forest composition and structure.

The old growth direction for these action alternatives is very different than it is for the No-Action alternative. For example, in contrast to the No-Action alternative, the action alternatives would not allow the removal (i.e., modifying the old growth stand characteristics to the degree that it no longer meets the old growth definition) of old growth stands through timber harvesting (see FW-STD-VEG-01). Rather, as opposed to the No-Action alternative, these action alternatives include direction (see FW-DC-VEG-03) to increase the amount of old growth on the Forest and to emphasize the development of the types of old growth that would be most resistant and resilient towards forest insects and diseases, wildfires, drought and other potential stressors such as climate change (e.g., ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine, and whitebark pine). Another difference between the 1987 Forest Plan and the action alternatives is that the action alternatives acknowledge that some management activities such as thinning and/or use of prescribed fire, could be used in certain old growth stands under certain circumstances to increase the resistance and/or resiliency of the stands to undesirable disturbances, such as stand replacing wildfire events or insect epidemics (see FW-GDL-VEG-01).

Regarding direction in the action alternatives that relates to road construction and old growth, the action alternatives contain more stringent direction that does the no-action alternative. The action alternatives have a plan component (see FW-GDL-VEG-02) that indicates that no temporary or permanent road construction or other developments would occur in old growth stands unless the road construction was needed to implement activities that were designed to increase the resistance and/or resilience of the stands to disturbances.

### **General Effects**

Vegetation management activities for each alternative were formulated by considering the MAs, land suitability, multiple-use objectives, and the management requirements set forth in NFMA. The type and amount of vegetation management and the effect on vegetation composition and size classes was modeled using both SIMPPLLE and Spectrum. See appendix B of this EIS for a description of these models and Chew (2012), Henderson (2013) and Ecosystem Research Group (2012) for detailed information on methodology. The SIMPPLLE model was primarily used to predict how the forest vegetation would change over time given forest succession, disturbances (wildfire and insects and diseases) and the management activities (prescribed burning and various timber harvesting treatments) that were anticipated under the various alternatives. SIMPPLLE predicted how much wildfire would occur in the future given the current condition of the forest vegetation, the effect of the climate becoming warming and drier during the fire season, the impact of certain insects and diseases and the effect of management activities.

Among other things, Spectrum was used to determine how well the changes to the forest conditions would or would not meet the desired conditions given the different management emphasis for each alternative. Using Spectrum specific model was developed for each alternative, with management actions and objective functions varying based on the theme of the alternative. Alternative A was run with an objective to maximize timber production while Alternatives B Modified and C had objectives to move towards the desired forest composition (Dominance Groups) and structure (size classes) as quickly as possible, while meeting other resource constraints. Alternative D had an objective function to maximize timber and then to move towards the desired condition for vegetation. All solutions were finally run with an objective to maximize present net value to ensure economic efficiency in vegetation treatments.

The Spectrum models included management actions for timber harvest and prescribed burning (except in Alternative A). Prescribed burning was not included in Alternative A because it had no objective to move towards vegetation desired conditions. The models also included the amount of stand-replacing wildfire – approximately 35,000 acres per decade (see appendix B for the analysis process in developing this number). For all of the forested areas, including where timber harvest or prescribed burning occurred as well as where those activities did not occur the models simulated general tree growth and mortality processes.

Several outputs were tracked by the Spectrum models including dominance groups, size classes, snag density, fire and insect hazard, and carbon sequestration. Dominance groups and size classes were included as objectives for management, while the other outputs were merely reported by the models.

The Spectrum model for each alternative was run twice. First it was run with a budget constraint, limiting timber harvest activities to what could be funded under current budget levels. The model was then run without a budget constraint to determine the amount of active management activities that could take place, given unlimited funds while meeting other resource constraints.

Several constraints were included in the Spectrum model to provide for other resource management concerns, operational limits, and NFMA requirements. See appendix B for a complete discussion of the model components.

Throughout this section, Spectrum results are shown for each alternative and when appropriate, SIMPPLLE results are summarized. Regarding Spectrum, it is important to note there are several limitations with the model. The model shows predicted changes given a set of assumptions, including the amount of stand-replacing wildfire and the effect of root disease on tree growth and mortality. The actual amount of stand-replacing wildfire and the amount and impact of root disease may be different from that modeled. Other natural disturbance, such as blowdown and drought were not included in the model. The model results are useful for understanding differences in alternatives and general trends in vegetation. Model results are not objectives for plan implementation but merely indicators of how vegetation may change over time based on management activities, an anticipated amount of disturbances (e.g., wildfire), and general forest successional processes. Results vary by alternative based on MA allocation, the theme of the alternative, and management intensity. For the remainder of the discussions regarding the Spectrum modeling results, the phrases “active management” or “actively managed” are used to denote acres that were simulated by the models to have either timber harvest or prescribed burning activities conducted on them.

Table 14 displays the estimated acres and the percent of the total acreage that were predicted to be actively managed during the first decade for each alternative and under both the constrained and unconstrained budget scenario.

**Table 14. Estimated Amount of Forested Vegetation that would be Actively Managed by Alternative and Budget Scenario**

Alternative and Budget Scenario	Acres of Forest Vegetation Managed During First Decade	Percent of Total Acreage on the KNF that would have Forest Vegetation Management During First Decade
A – without budget constraint	57,320	2.6

Alternative and Budget Scenario	Acres of Forest Vegetation Managed During First Decade	Percent of Total Acreage on the KNF that would have Forest Vegetation Management During First Decade
A – with budget constraint	61,150	2.8
B Modified – without budget constraint	194,700	8.9
B Modified – with budget constraint	158,140	7.1
C – without budget constraint	191,290	8.6
C – with budget constraint	163,360	7.4
D – without budget constraint	165,440	7.6
D – with budget constraint	156,180	7.0

Table 14 shows that without a budget constraint Alternative B Modified would actively manage slightly more acres than would Alternative C, and substantially more than either A or D. With a constrained budget, Alternative C would actively manage slightly more acres than would Alternative B Modified, and a substantial more acreage than either Alternatives A or D. Alternative A does the least amount of vegetation management. The model for Alternative A did not include prescribed burning as a vegetation management activity, since the model had no objective to move towards vegetation desired conditions.

Table 15 illustrates the change to forest composition (indicated by the distribution of dominance groups) by alternative over the next five decades as well as the change needed from current conditions in order to be within the range for desired conditions. Acres by alternative include changes for all forested acres; both those that had timber harvest or prescribed burning activities, and those that did not.

Table 15 indicates some of the dominance groups are moving towards desired conditions while others are not. Those dominance groups that are generally moving towards desired conditions under both budget scenarios include ponderosa pine, western white pine, western larch (with the exception of Alternative A under both budget scenarios and Alternative D under the constrained budget) and the grand fir/cedar/western hemlock mix (except Alternative C with constrained budget). Those dominance groups that are generally moving away from desired conditions under both budget scenarios include Subalpine fir mix, lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir (except Alternative D with unconstrained budget).

**Table 15. Change in Acres by Dominance Group by Alternative over the next 50 Years**

Dominance Group	Minimum Change needed to be within Desired Condition Range	Alt A <sup>1</sup>	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
<b>Results with Unconstrained Budget</b>					
Ponderosa Pine	+37,000	+36,156	+44,339	+38,560	+46,886
Douglas-fir	-437,700	+42,046	+19,349	+28,493	-19,098
Lodgepole Pine	Within <sup>2</sup>	-128,471	-117,368	-115,162	-129,710
Western Larch	+252,800	-2,405	+18,581	+8,893	+13,292
Grand fir/Cedar/ Western Hemlock mix	-6,100	-12,055	-32,305	-28,002	-26,074



Dominance Group	Minimum Change needed to be within Desired Condition Range	Alt A <sup>1</sup>	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
White Pine	+67,800	+16,524	+46,215	+39,035	+37,196
Subalpine Fir mix	-73,900	+86,640	+74,000	+76,976	+82,020
<b>Results with Constrained Budget</b>					
Ponderosa Pine	+37,000	+35,111	+30,855	+30,549	+31,846
Douglas-fir	-437,700	+64,662	+40,177	+40,672	+56,453
Lodgepole Pine	Within <sup>2</sup>	-132,985	-131,081	-131,482	-142,317
Western Larch	+252,800	-22,420	+8,649	+9,050	-4,186
Grand fir/Cedar/ Western Hemlock mix	-6,100	-25,752	-25,974	+1,381	-33,970
White Pine	+67,800	+30,546	+29,390	+1,117	+37,311
Subalpine fir mix	-73,900	+88,850	+86,611	+87,024	+89,537

<sup>1</sup> Alternative A does not have an objective to manage for vegetation desired condition. Numbers reported are results only, and not a desired outcome from the model

<sup>2</sup> Lodgepole pine is currently within the desired condition range. To stay within the range, there should be no more than a 94,500 acre reduction or no more than a 131,600 acre increase in Lodgepole pine

Under a constrained budget, fewer acres are actively managed and less progress is made in moving towards desired conditions. Alternative B Modified would trend slightly more of the dominance groups towards the desired conditions and to a greater degree than would Alternative C under both budget scenarios. Alternatives A and D would not trend the dominance groups toward the desired conditions as much as would Alternative B Modified or Alternative C.

As noted above, three dominance groups are either not moving towards vegetation desired or moved outside of the desired range over the 50-year simulation period. The subalpine mix and Douglas-fir are moving away from desired conditions while lodgepole pine is currently in the desired range, but is predicted to move outside of the desired range to a small degree. In addition, even the dominance groups that are trending toward the desired conditions are generally not moving towards those conditions very substantially, especially given the long 50-year simulation period and the likely scenario that budgets will indeed be constrained. There are two key reasons for these general modeling results. First, a large portion of the Forest is not being actively managed in the model simulations because only 33-38 percent (depending upon alternative) of the forested acreage has been determined to be suitable for timber production, and even those acres have various resource constraints placed upon them that limit the frequency and intensity of the treatments (see the management constraint section of appendix B for more details). Thus, even under the assumption of an unconstrained budget very little of the forested area gets actively managed and therefore there is very limited opportunity to use management tools (i.e., timber harvest or prescribed fire) to trend the vegetation towards desired conditions. For example, as shown in table 14, during the first decade only about three to nine percent (depending upon alternative and budget scenario) of the forested area is actively managed.

The second reason that the models are not predicting more progress towards achieving the desired condition for the dominance groups has to do with the lack of enough fire disturbance on the landscape that would beneficially affect the dominance groups. Even though the SIMPPLLE model predicts a substantial amount of wildfire will occur in the future (e.g., approximately

35,000 acres/decade of stand replacing fire), it is not enough to have a substantial beneficial impact at the scale of the entire KNF in regards to the dominance groups.

In the absence of fire or active management, most of the changes in species composition over time would be in the opposite direction from what is desired. In general, the desired trend is to obtain more forests dominated by early seral, shade-intolerant species (e.g., western larch, ponderosa pine, white pine, and white bark pine), yet without either active management (harvest and/or prescribe burning) or wildfires, the current trend of the forest becoming more and more dominated by shade-tolerant, mid-to late-seral tree species (e.g., Douglas-fir, grand fir, western hemlock, cedar, and subalpine fir) will continue. If more wildfire were to actually occur than was simulated in the models, then it is likely that it would improve the trajectory more towards the desired dominance groups.

Broadleaved tree species (e.g., water birch, paper birch, quaking aspen, and black cottonwood) dominate relatively few forest stands on the KNF (approximately 0.7 percent). These species were not included in the modeling and thus no quantitative estimates are provided as to how they may increase or decrease in abundance under the different alternatives. However, some general qualitative trends can be predicted based on the knowledge of the silvics<sup>1</sup> of these trees, along with an understanding of how the predicted amounts of active management and wildfires may impact the species. All of these broadleaved species can be characterized as being intolerant or very intolerant of shade, and of being early seral or pioneer species (Burns and Honkala 1990). With one exception (black cottonwood) these species live relatively short lives. All of these species are dependent upon disturbances to regenerate themselves. It could be wildfire, prescribed burning, timber harvesting, riparian flooding, or another type of disturbance that provides growing space and suitable conditions for the establishment and growth of these trees. Historically, wildfire was probably the most important disturbance agent in perpetuating these species on upland sites, while a combination of wildfires, blowdown, and flooding were likely the most important in the riparian areas. Without active management or substantial amounts of fire, it is expected that these broadleaved species will continue to decrease in abundance.

Without a budget constraint, Alternative B Modified would likely have the most beneficial effect on increasing the broadleaved tree species with Alternative C ranked second. Under a budget constraint, Alternative C would have the largest impact towards the desired condition with Alternative B Modified ranked a fairly close second. Alternatives A and D would have much less of a positive impact under both budget scenarios.

As described in the “Affected Environment” section, whitebark pine occurs over a small percentage of the Forest (approximately 2 percent) and this species has been declining in abundance due to bark beetles, blister rust, and fire exclusion. Although an attempt was made to model how the habitat (i.e., amount of suitable habitat for regeneration of whitebark pine) for whitebark pine might change over time under the alternatives and budget scenarios, results from the modeling were somewhat inconclusive (Ecosystem Research Group (2012). However, it seems that the amount of area that is suitable for the regeneration of whitebark pine is predicted to increase in the future as more wildfires burn in the higher elevations where potential habitat occurs. Aside from the modeling effort, all of the Action Alternatives contain direction that would encourage restoration activities to occur for this species. Obviously, more active management would occur without a budget constraint than it would if budgets were constrained. Since Alternative A does not contain management direction that encourages whitebark pine

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<sup>1</sup> Silvics is known as the study of the life history and general characteristics of forest trees and stands, with particular reference to environmental factors.

restoration activities, that alternative would have the least potential for activities to occur that would benefit that species.

Table 16 illustrates the change to forest structure (indicated by the distribution of size classes) by alternative over the next five decades as well as the change needed from current conditions in order to be within the range for desired conditions. Acres by alternative include changes for all acres, including lands that are actively managed and those that are not.

**Table 16. Change in Acres by Size Class by Alternative over the next 50 Years**

Size Class	Minimum Change needed to be within Desired Condition Range	Alt A <sup>1</sup>	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
<b>Results with Unconstrained Budget</b>					
Seedling/sapling	Within <sup>2</sup>	-75,849	-85,168	-84,833	-81,655
Small	-172,600	+338,462	+263,420	+258,304	+324,260
Medium	-281,500	-278,208	-262,271	-255,848	-280,929
Large/Very large	+221,900	+54,032	+128,011	+127,165	+77,382
<b>Results with Constrained Budget</b>					
Seedling/sapling	Within <sup>2</sup>	-87,475	-66,652	-60,030	-91,789
Small	-172,600	+251,859	+194,234	+210,306	+204,919
Medium	-281,500	-236,657	-223,697	-241,342	-210,937
Large/Very large	+221,900	+110,286	+134,742	+129,377	+132,481

<sup>1</sup> Alternative A does not have an objective to manage for vegetation desired condition. Numbers reported are results only, and not a desired outcome from the model

<sup>2</sup> The seedling/sapling size class is within the desired range. If more than 76,000 acres are lost or more than 232,300 acres added, this size class will no longer be within the desired range

Table 16 indicates that under the unconstrained budget scenario that the seedling/sapling size class is generally moving out of the desired range under all alternatives (except Alternative A, which is close). In this unconstrained budget scenario, the large/very large size class trends toward the desired condition under all alternatives, but Alternatives B Modified and C have a much larger beneficial impact than Alternatives A and D.

Under the assumption of a constrained budget, the amount of the seedling/sapling size class moves out of the desired range under Alternatives A and D, but stays within the desired range for Alternative B Modified and C. The constrained budget would result in the large/very large size class trending towards the desired range much more in Alternative B Modified and Alternative D, then would Alternatives C and A.. Depending upon the alternative and budget scenario that is being considered, the seedling/sapling size class may or may not move outside of the desired range. However, for all alternatives and both budget scenarios, that size class decreases substantially by the 5th decade. This is because of the relatively small amount of active management that is predicted to occur that would create this size class, as well as the lack of enough wildfire to have a meaningful effect at the scale of the entire Forest. Although the model simulations predict a substantial increase in the amount of wildfire in the coming decades compared to the recent past, there is still not enough acres burning, nor active management occurring that creates young, early-seral stands in the seedling/sapling size class.

With the unconstrained budget scenario, Alternative B Modified and C are slightly better in trending the vegetation towards the desired condition for size class as compared to the other alternatives (A and D). With the constrained budget scenario, Alternative B Modified trends the overall size class distribution towards the desired conditions to the greatest degree, with Alternative C ranked second, and Alternative A and D much less so.

As noted in the affected environment section, the SIMPPLLE and Spectrum model simulations were used to predict how much of the forested vegetation may be similar in structure to old growth stands in the future. The results of the simulations are presented in table 17 below. The results show that for all alternatives and budget scenarios the amount of acres in the very large size class is predicted to increase substantially in the next 50 years. As noted earlier, the very large size class in the model simulations represents stands that are dominated by trees 20" in diameter or greater. Therefore, those estimates can be used to provide a rough estimate of how many acres may have similar characteristics to old growth stands in the future given all the predictions and assumptions built into the model simulations regarding wildfire, insects and diseases, future climate change (i.e., the modeling assumed a warmer/drier scenario from decade 3 to 5), and the amount of active management that is anticipated to occur for each alternative.

Despite the relatively large amount of the forest that is predicted to have stand replacing type wildfires during the next 50 years (approximately 173,000 acres total or 35,000/decade) and the insect and disease impacts, the model simulations still predict substantial increases in the amount of the forest in the very large size class in the future. As illustrated in table 17, Alternative B Modified is predicted to increase the amount of forest in the very large size class slightly more than Alternative C, and substantially more than Alternatives A and D under the unconstrained budget scenario. In comparison, assuming that the budget is constrained, Alternative C is predicted to increase the amount of forest in the very large size class more than Alternative B Modified, which would increase the very large size class more than Alternative A and D.

**Table 17. Change in Acres of Very Large Size Class over the next 50 years, by Alternative and Budget Scenario**

<b>Budget Scenario</b>	<b>Alternative A</b>	<b>Alternative B Modified</b>	<b>Alternative C</b>	<b>Alternative D</b>
Unconstrained	+91,346	+110,126	+108,864	+88,203
Constrained	+99,372	+103,370	+111,953	+97,459

As previously noted, if more stand-replacing wildfire occurs than was modeled, there may be a more desirable overall improvement in the movement of size classes towards desired conditions. With a small amount of forested vegetation actively managed, with either regeneration harvest or simulated wildfires, only a small portion of the Forest is converted to the seedling/sapling size class. This in turn affects the amount of acres in the small size class, resulting in levels below desired condition while the large and very large size classes see great increases.

In addition to using size classes to describe how forest structure may change over time as a result of implementing the various alternatives, the snag component of forest structure was also analyzed using the Spectrum model. A forest growth simulation model called Forest Vegetation Simulator was used to predict tree growth, mortality, and yield attributes for the Spectrum model (see appendix B). Snags were one of the many items estimated by Forest Vegetation Simulator and incorporated into the Spectrum model. The amount of snags by density class was reported by

the Spectrum model. Amounts of snags were a result of management (or no management) actions. There were no constraints or objectives to manage for certain levels of snags in the model.

The “Affected Environment” section provides detailed information about the existing and desired snag quantities and sizes. Table 18 contains information on predicted changes during the next five decades to snag densities and sizes as a result of implementing the various alternatives. All alternatives show an increase in the percentage of acres that have the highest number of snags per acre (both the 10-20 inch diameter snags as well as the 20 inch plus diameter snags). All action alternatives and budget scenarios would meet or exceed the standards and guidelines for snags.

**Table 18. Percent of the Total Forested Acres that occur in each Snag Density and Size Class at Decade 1 and 5, and the Percent Change during that Period for each Alternative**

Snag Size Class	Snag Density Class- # snags/ acre	Alternative A			Alternative B Modified			Alternative C			Alternative D		
		Percent of Total Forested Acres		Percent Change	Percent of Total Forested Acres		Percent Change	Percent of Total Forested Acres		Percent Change	Percent of Total Forested Acres		Percent Change
		Decade 1	Decade 5		Decade 1	Decade 5		Decade 1	Decade 5		Decade 1	Decade 5	
Unconstrained Budget													
Snags 10-20" DBH	0-5.9	20	11	-9	20	10	-10	20	10	-10	20	14	-16
	6-9.9	7	14	7	6	14	8	6	14	8	7	13	6
	10+	73	75	2	73	75	2	73	76	3	73	73	0
Snags 20"+ DBH	0-0.9	29	26	-3	29	27	-2	29	26	-3	29	27	-2
	1-3.9	60	39	-21	60	37	-23	60	37	-23	59	39	-20
	4+	11	35	24	12	36	24	12	37	25	11	34	23
Constrained Budget													
Snags 10-20" DBH	0-5.9	21	8	-13	20	8	-12	20	7	-13	21	7	-4
	6-9.9	6	13	7	6	11	5	6	11	5	6	13	7
	10+	73	78	5	73	81	8	73	83	10	73	80	7
Snags 20"+ DBH	0-0.9	29	27	-2	29	28	-1	29	27	-2	29	28	-1
	1-3.9	60	37	-23	60	36	-24	60	34	-26	60	35	-25
	4+	11	36	25	12	37	25	12	39	27	11	37	26

## *Landscape Pattern*

### **Management Direction**

#### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

The existing Forest Plan contains minimal direction on the desired landscape pattern for forest vegetation. One forestwide wildlife standard (p. II-23) indicates that openings created by timber harvest would generally be 40 acres or less. For one specific MA (MA14) there is some direction that is specific to grizzly bear habitat regarding the desire to maintain corridors between harvest units and to maximize edge effects.

In addition to the direction described above that is only applicable to Alternative A, the following Plan direction is common to all alternatives and could potentially affect the landscape pattern of forest conditions. The “retained existing Forest Plan direction” in the revised Forest Plan (see chapter 1 of this EIS and appendix B in the revised Forest Plan for more information on this direction) that could potentially affect landscape pattern includes the INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995), NRLMD (USDA Forest Service 2007 March), and the Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones. When describing the effects that the alternatives would have on landscape patterns, the direction mentioned above was considered.

#### *Action Alternatives B Modified, C, and D*

Alternatives B Modified, C, and D contain a forestwide goal (Goal-01) and a desired condition (FW-DC-VEG-05) on the desired pattern relative to the existing pattern for forest structure and composition. In addition, the desired pattern for forest structure and composition is provided for each of the three biophysical settings (FW-DC-VEG-11). The desired pattern for hazardous fuels is provided in FW-DC-FIRE-02 and the desired pattern for snags is described in FW-DC-VEG-07. At the smaller scale (GAs), additional direction is provided on certain aspects of landscape pattern (i.e., GA-DC-WL-FSH-01 and GA-DC-WL-LIB-01). There is also Forest Plan direction related to fire that affects landscape pattern.

### **General Effects**

As discussed previously, past wildfire suppression efforts and timber harvest patterns have largely been responsible for creating a pattern of forest conditions (e.g., size class, species composition, stand structure, and density) different from historical patterns. The current pattern is more susceptible to some insects, diseases, and wildfire disturbances. Forest patches dominated by the smallest-sized trees, as well as patches dominated by the largest trees, have decreased substantially in size relative to historical conditions. On the other hand, patches of forest dominated by trees of moderate size have become much larger. Across all size classes and fuel conditions the continuity of stand structures has increased and become more homogenized at the landscape scale.

Alternative A does not contain direction to provide for improved landscape pattern. Under the direction of the current Forest Plan it is assumed that regeneration harvest treatments will continue to be relatively small in size, that commercial thinning treatments would only occur over small-to moderate-size areas, and that almost all wildfires would be suppressed, or an attempt made at suppression. As previously discussed, all of the alternatives would be expected to have a substantial number of acres burn from wildfires despite suppression efforts. Therefore, wildfires are likely to have beneficial effects in the landscape pattern for all the alternatives.

Alternative A would likely have the least beneficial effect on the pattern of size classes on the landscape (relative to the desired conditions). The patch size of the seed/sap size class would not increase and the patch size of the small/medium size classes would not decrease. Although there are exceptions, a relatively high percentage of the large patches of forest that are dominated by stands in the small/medium size classes are located in MAs that either exclude the use of commercial timber harvesting or de-emphasize it. Therefore, without the use of prescribed burning at a large scale, or the use of natural, unplanned ignitions in those areas to break up the continuity of fuels and stand structures, these large patches of forest dominated by medium size trees will not be reduced as desired (unless burned via a wildfire). As discussed in more detail in the section about resistance and resiliency to disturbances, the ramifications of the predicted trends for landscape pattern include a greater likelihood that some disturbances, such as wildfires and bark beetles, may become larger and/or more intense in the future due to some of the connectivity of some of these forest conditions.

Under the action alternatives, management direction for landscape pattern is anticipated to lead to improvements in the pattern of forest vegetation on the landscape. The amount of improvement in landscape pattern is directly related to the amount of active or passive vegetation management that will occur. Without a budget constraint Alternative B Modified would actively manage slightly more acres than would Alternative C, and substantially more than either A or D. With a constrained budget, Alternative C would actively manage slightly more acres than would Alternative B Modified, which would manage acreage than either Alternatives A or D. Alternative A does the least amount of vegetation management.

### *Resistance and Resiliency to Disturbances and Stress Agents*

#### **Management Direction**

##### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

The 1987 Forest Plan does not contain any explicit direction regarding the management of the Forest for a goal or objective of maintaining or improving the resistance and/or the resiliency of the forest vegetation to disturbances and other forest stressors. However, through several Plan components, the Plan does portray the intent to protect the timber resource from insect, disease, and/or wildfire-caused damage. The 1987 Plan contains a protection standard (#14, p. II-26) that indicates that integrated pest management strategies and treatments would be used to reduce losses from insects and diseases to acceptable levels. In addition, there are two objectives (Protection objective p. II-10 and Fire objective p. II-11) that express the desire to minimize the number of acres lost to damaging wildfires and to attempt to harvest as much of the lodgepole pine susceptible to mountain pine beetle as possible before it is killed. Finally, there is one forestwide goal (Goal #17) that expresses a desire to use prescribed fire to simulate natural ecological processes, prevent excessive natural and activity fuel buildups, create habitat diversity for wildlife, reduce suppression costs, and maintain ecosystems.

For Alternative A (as well as the other alternatives) the “retained existing Forest Plan direction” that has been previously discussed could affect this issue; and therefore, it was considered in the following analysis. As was done with other topics, some of the effects of this direction could be predicted with modeling, while other effects were addressed qualitatively.

##### *Action Alternatives B Modified, C, and D*

These alternatives contain numerous Forest Plan components that provided direction regarding the need and desire to increase the resistance and resiliency of the forest conditions to



disturbances and stressors. For example, forestwide vegetation and fire goals (Goal-01) and desired conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01, 03, 04, 05, 06, 11, FW-DC-FIRE-02, 03) articulate the need and vision for managing the Forest towards that overall goal. In addition, forestwide vegetation and fire objectives (FW-OBJ-VEG-01, FW-OBJ-FIRE-01) and guidelines (FW-GDL-VEG-01, 02) contain additional direction and guidance on this topic.

As discussed above in the “Management Direction” section for Alternative A, some of the “retained existing Forest Plan direction” was considered for these alternatives as well.

### General Effects

Forest conditions on the KNF are currently quite different from the range of historical conditions with regard to composition, structure, landscape pattern, and ecological processes. Consequently, the Forest is predisposed to new levels and types of stress agents and disturbances. Combined with the possible effects of climate change (discussed in more detail in the “Cumulative Effects” section), the current conditions are not desirable.

The resistance and resiliency of a forest to stress agents and disturbances is largely a function of the composition, structure (including density) and landscape pattern of forest conditions, and how those elements interact together. Both quantitative and qualitative information is utilized to assess how susceptible the forest may be to the various key stress agents.

The Forest Vegetation Simulator was used to model bark beetles, defoliating insects, and wildfire risk. These attributes were included in the growth and yield tables in the Spectrum model and reported for each run (see appendix B and Vandendriesche (2005) for more information on the Forest Vegetation Simulator and Spectrum modeling). Other important disturbances or stressors that could potentially affect the alternatives, such as root diseases, white pine blister rust, and weather (e.g., drought, wind, and snow/ice) were addressed qualitatively.

Table 19 displays the Spectrum results for fire, bark beetle, and budworm hazard ratings for each alternative. The table shows current percent of the Forest by hazard rating and percent change in ratings from decade 1 to decade 5.

**Table 19. Percent of Total Forested Acres of Fire, Bark Beetle, and Defoliator Hazard Rating at Decade 1, and the Change between Decade 1 and Decade 5, by Alternative**

Hazard Type	Hazard Rating	Decade 1- % of Total Acres	Percent Increase or Decrease of Total Acres from Decade 1 to Decade 5			
			Alt. A	Alt. B Modified	Alt. C	Alt. D
Results with Unconstrained Budget						
Fire	Low/Moderate	7%	9%	25%	25%	24%
	High/Very High/Extreme	93%	-9%	-25%	-25%	-24%
Bark Beetles	Low	5%	9%	4%	3%	5%
	Moderate	83%	-8%	-5%	-4%	-8%
	High	11%	4%	1%	1%	4%
Defoliators	Low	10%	0%	2%	-1%	2%
	Moderate	49%	-12%	-12%	-12%	-8%

Hazard Type	Hazard Rating	Decade 1- % of Total Acres	Percent Increase or Decrease of Total Acres from Decade 1 to Decade 5			
			Alt. A	Alt. B Modified	Alt. C	Alt. D
	High	41%	12%	11%	11%	7%
<b>Results with Current Budget Level</b>						
Fire	Low/Moderate	7%	8%	19%	20%	19%
	High/Very High/Extreme	93%	-8%	-19%	-20%	-19%
Bark Beetles	Low	5%	1%	2%	1%	1%
	Moderate	83%	-4%	-3%	-1%	-2%
	High	11%	3%	1%	0%	1%
Defoliators	Low	10%	-5%	-3%	-2%	-4%
	Moderate	49%	-14%	-10%	-11%	-10%
	High	41%	18%	13%	13%	14%

**Fire hazard** – As illustrated in table 19, a large percentage of the total forested acres on the KNF were rated as having a high, very high, or extreme fire hazard. This is decreased somewhat over the first five decades. Timber harvest and prescribed burning reduces the fire hazard in stands. However, even though the results in table 19 show a reduction in the percentage of the Forest in the combined high, very high and extreme hazard classes, the amount of Forest in the extreme class goes up substantially over time. This is a result of the acres in the high and very high categories having a tendency to move into the extreme category. Alternatives with the most passive and active management will have the greatest impact on reducing the trend of increasing the amount of the Forest in the extreme category. Alternatives B Modified and C reduce fire hazard the most and Alternative A the least. This is because Alternatives B Modified and C have the most acres of active and passive management while Alternative A has the least amount of active management and does not include prescribed burning. Relative to the constrained budget scenario, the unconstrained budget scenario would result in a greater reduction in the higher hazard levels for all alternatives.

After the draft Forest Plan and DEIS was released to the public, some additional modeling was conducted using SIMPPLLE to determine how much and what kind of wildfire might occur on the KNF in the next 5 decades (Ecosystem Research Group 2012, Chew 2012). The complete modeling and analysis was done for a no-action alternative (no active management at all), and for Alternative B Modified with and without budget constraints. The results and methodology are explained at length in the reports by the Ecosystem Research Group (2012) and Chew (2012). The summary is that wildfires will increase substantially across the Forest in the next five decades, despite the assumption of continued suppression efforts. However, compared to an alternative of not conducting any active treatments (timber harvesting or prescribe burning), Alternative B Modified was found to result in a decrease in acres burned and the severity of the fires with the most noticeable reduction being to the stand replacing fires, versus the mixed and low severity types (Ecosystem Research Group 2012). The unconstrained budget scenario had a larger effect of decreasing the wildfire acres than did the constrained budget.

**Bark Beetle Hazard** – The bark beetle hazard rating is a hazard rating of tree mortality from the spruce beetle, mountain pine beetle, and the Douglas-fir beetle (Vandendriesche 2005). The low,

moderate, and high hazard rating system was based on risk factors such as tree diameter, stand density (basal area), and the percentage of the stand that was a host species. As shown in table 19, most of the forested acres (83 percent) have a hazard rating of moderate at the beginning of decade one. Under both of the budget scenarios, all of the alternatives show a slight increase in the high rating over the first five decades. The amount of change is reflective of the amount of active and passive management. Alternatives B Modified and C have the smallest increase in acreage of high hazard rating for the bark beetles.

**Defoliator Hazard** – The defoliator hazard rating is a hazard rating of tree mortality from the western spruce budworm and Douglas-fir tussock moth (Vandendriesche 2005). The primary host trees for these insects are Douglas-fir, grand fir, subalpine fir, and Englemann spruce. As illustrated in table 19, most of the forested acres have a hazard rating of moderate (49 percent) or high (41 percent) at the beginning of decade 1, while approximately 10 percent is in the low category. Under all alternatives, the proportion of acres with a high rating increases by the 5th decade while the amount in moderate and low categories decreases. The increase in the high rating is largely a function of an increase in tree species that serve as primary hosts to these defoliating insects (the more shade-tolerant grand fir, subalpine fir, Englemann spruce, and Douglas-fir) as well as the stand structures becoming more conducive to these insects (i.e., denser with more canopy layers). Both passive and active management activities reduce the amount of high rating. Compared to Alternative A, the action alternatives all have smaller increases in the high hazard category. In addition, the unconstrained budget scenario results in a smaller increase in the high hazard for all alternatives compared to the constrained budget.

After the draft Forest Plan and DEIS were released to the public, some additional modeling was conducted for bark beetles and a defoliator insect using the SIMPPLLE model (Ecosystem Research Group 2012, Chew 2012). The modeling was done for the mountain pine beetle, Douglas-fir beetle, and for the western spruce budworm. The results and methodology are explained at length in the reports by the Ecosystem Research Group (2012) and Chew (2012). The complete modeling and analysis was done for a no-action alternative (no active management at all), and for Alternative B Modified with and without budget constraints. To summarize, a substantial amount of acreage of the KNF is expected to be affected by the mountain pine beetle (primarily killing lodgepole pine) in the next few decades. Alternative B Modified has fewer acres affected by the mountain pine beetle than would an alternative that did not actively treat any vegetation. Regarding impacts from either the western spruce budworm or the Douglas-fir beetle, the SIMPPLLE modeling did not discern much difference in acres impacted between the no-action and Alternative B Modified (Ecosystem Research Group 2012).

**Root Diseases** – Effects of the alternatives on root disease was qualitatively assessed based on the anticipated changes to forest composition. Armillaria root disease and annosus and laminated root rots are three of the more important root pathogens on the KNF. Grand fir, Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, and the hemlocks (western and mountain) are generally the most susceptible tree species, while the more tolerant or resistant are generally ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine, western redcedar, and lodgepole pine.

The change to tree composition over the next 50 years is described above (see table 15 and subsequent discussion). The increases predicted in ponderosa pine, larch, and white pine with the associated decrease in Douglas-fir and grand fir/cedar/western hemlock mix (under the action alternatives) will improve conditions and serve to otherwise reduce root disease impacts. However, the predicted increases in the subalpine fir mix and grand fir/cedar/western hemlock mix (under Alternative A only) will increase susceptibility to root disease. Those alternatives that

do the best job moving vegetation towards desired condition (Alternatives B Modified, C, and D) will also reduce the amount of acres susceptible to root disease.

After the draft Forest Plan and DEIS were released to the public, some additional modeling was conducted for root disease using the SIMPPLLE model (Ecosystem Research Group 2012, Chew 2012). The results and methodology are explained at length in the reports by the Ecosystem Research Group (2012) and Chew (2012). The analysis concluded that the acres affected by root disease on the KNF will increase in the future, but that in comparison to an alternative of doing no active management, Alternative B Modified would result in fewer acres being impacted (Ecosystem Research Group 2012).

**White Pine Blister Rust** – Management activities to reduce the effects of white pine blister rust include; planting of rust resistant western white pine and vegetation management activities in whitebark pine stands (thinning, prescribed burning). As described above for tree composition (see table 15 and subsequent discussion), Alternatives B Modified and C under the unconstrained budget scenario, and Alternatives A and B Modified under the constrained budget scenario, provide the greatest increase in white pine. As previously noted, all of the action alternatives would improve conditions for white bark pine, especially if there were no budget constraints. Alternative A has the least direction to manage to improve these pine species.

**Weather, Moisture Stress, and Forest Density** – Forest composition, structure, and landscape pattern can influence the susceptibility of forest stands to weather related disturbances or stressors. Therefore, to the degree that the alternatives influence those forest conditions, they also influence the potential stress caused by weather related disturbances.

Droughts are a weather event that often occurs on a decadal basis and serves to stress trees, especially those that are drought-intolerant. This in turn can predispose the trees to bark beetle attacks and/or root diseases (Hagle et al. 2000, Bentz et al. 2010). Under Alternative A (both budget scenarios) the drought-intolerant species of grand fir, hemlock, cedar, and subalpine fir are expected to increase in abundance. Therefore, in the future when droughts do occur, the Forest is likely to exhibit increased signs and symptoms of this stress. Alternatives B Modified and C provide the most active and passive management to reduce the amount of these species and replace them with more drought-tolerant species, such as ponderosa pine, larch, and white pine. As discussed in the “Affected Environment” section, the density of a forest affects the moisture stress that trees are under and influences their susceptibility to mortality from a number of insect and diseases. Through both active and passive management, Alternatives B Modified and C would reduce the forest density more towards the desired conditions than would the other alternatives.

Snow and/or ice accumulations and wind are other weather events to which certain species and forest structures are susceptible. A substantial amount of blowdown and/or stem breakage can precipitate bark beetle outbreaks, increase surface fuel loadings, and elevate fire hazards. In general, the most susceptible species and stand structures are predicted to increase under Alternative A. Alternatives B Modified and C provide the most active and passive management and increase the species that are less susceptible to windthrow.

## Carbon Sequestration

### Management Direction

#### *All Alternatives*

The effect of management activities on the ability of forest vegetation to sequester carbon was not an issue or analysis item that was included in the 1987 Forest Plan; therefore, Alternative A does not include any management direction on this item. Alternatives B Modified, C, and D indirectly give carbon sequestration direction by addressing disturbance processes that affect sequestration. Management activities can affect the ability of forests to sequester carbon when they address relevant disturbance processes. The Forest Plan components of Alternatives B Modified, C, and D presented above in the “Management Direction” section of the “Resistance and Resiliency to Disturbances and Stress Agents” topic, are relevant to carbon sequestration.

### General Effects

Carbon sequestration is a measurement of how much carbon is stored on the Forest. Carbon sequestration was modeled in Spectrum in three different pools: forest inventory or growing stock volume; harvested forest products; and dead forest inventory volume resulting from stand-replacing wildfires. For the inventory pool, both non-soil carbon and soil organic carbon were taken into account. The harvested forest product is the amount of carbon stored in wood products harvested and removed from the forest. This amount diminishes over time. The dead forest inventory is the amount of carbon stored in dead timber following a stand-replacing wildfire. This amount also decreases over time. See appendix B for more information. Table 20 summarizes the total metric tons of carbon sequestered 50 years from now (in the 5th decade of the model).

**Table 20. Thousand Metric Tons of Carbon Sequestered in the 5th Decade by Alternative**

	Alt. A	Alt. B Modified	Alt. C	Alt. D
<b>Results with Unconstrained Budget</b>				
Carbon sequestered in inventory of forested acres	175,219	174,640	175,273	172,529
Carbon sequestered in wood products	1,718	1,641	1,553	1,942
Carbon sequestered in acres burned by wildfire	1,405	1,319	1,312	1,331
<b>Total Carbon</b>	<b>178,342</b>	<b>177,600</b>	<b>178,138</b>	<b>175,802</b>
<b>Results with Current Budget Level</b>				
Carbon sequestered in inventory of forested acres	179,830	177,709	178,457	177,987
Carbon sequestered in wood products	999	946	841	955
Carbon sequestered in acres burned by wildfire	1,365	1,341	1,325	1,349
<b>Total Carbon</b>	<b>182,194</b>	<b>179,996</b>	<b>180,623</b>	<b>180,291</b>

At the unconstrained budget level, Alternative D has the least carbon sequestered because it has the highest number of acres with regeneration harvest. Carbon sequestration is higher under the constrained budget level because fewer acres are regeneration harvested. It should be noted the amount of carbon sequestered is very similar for all alternatives. This is because of the large inventory (standing trees) on the Forest sequestering carbon. This inventory doesn't change much by alternative.

Currently, the KNF stores approximately 160 million metric tons. For all alternatives, the KNF acts as a carbon sink, sequestering more carbon over time than is lost through natural and human disturbance. Alternative A, at the constrained budget level, has the largest addition in carbon sequestration storing an additional 26.4 million metric tons over the next 50 years. Alternative D, at the unconstrained budget level, has the smallest addition in carbon sequestration storing an additional 20.4 million metric tons over the next 50 years.

#### *Consequences to Forest Vegetation from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

The general effects that the alternatives would have on forest vegetation have been described above. That discussion focused on the consequences that would result from implementing the Forest Plan components related to forest vegetation. The emphasis in the following discussion is on how other (i.e., those not directly related to forest vegetation) Forest Plan components may influence forest vegetation and the attainment of the desired conditions.

#### **Effects from Access and Recreation Management**

Forest Plan direction for scenery management in the action alternatives (i.e., FW-GDL-AR-01) would restrict the type of vegetation treatments that could occur in some areas across the Forest. For example, some regeneration methods or other silvicultural practices (e.g., the use of prescribed fire or natural, unplanned ignitions) may not be compatible with the scenic integrity objectives of High or Very High that are established along scenic travel routes; therefore, those components could have a small effect on the ability to reach the desired conditions for forest vegetation. The consequences that would result from the no-action alternative as a result of Plan components in the 1987 Forest Plan are fairly similar to the action alternatives.

Forest Plan direction for management of transportation systems in the action alternatives (i.e., FW-DC-AR-07, FW-OBJ-AR-03) may limit vegetation management opportunities. Placing roads into intermittent storage or decommissioning roads could increase future costs associated with vegetation treatments, and therefore, could have an impact on the economic feasibility of these treatments. However, because only a relatively small amount of road storage/decommissioning activities are anticipated across the Forest, the effects are minimal.

Public safety issues in developed and undeveloped recreation sites may limit the ability to maintain the desired snag levels that are indicated under the action alternatives (i.e., FW-DC-VEG-07 and FW-GDL-VEG-04). However, because these recreation areas are generally very small in size, the effect of not having snags or the ability to meet the forestwide desired conditions is negligible.

Winter recreation trails (primarily the groomed snowmobile routes) and associated Forest Plan direction (i.e., FW-OBJ-AR-04) may affect the ability to implement some winter season vegetation treatments because of a conflicting resource issue, such as grizzly bear security or soil disturbance type concerns. However, these effects are likely small and do not vary by alternative.

The use of over-snow vehicles off of groomed or ungroomed routes could cause a small, insignificant amount of damage to trees or other vegetation that protrudes above the snow. In rare instances, the tops of small trees that extend above the snowpack could be damaged from over-snow vehicles. However, in most cases this effect would only be noticeable in very small areas where the public might concentrate their use of these vehicles. Seldom would the impact likely result in any mortality of the trees or shrubs. Rather, this impact could cause very minor forking of the damaged trees.

### Effects from Wildlife Management

Measures to protect certain wildlife species limit treatments to move vegetation towards desired conditions. Management direction for grizzly bear, lynx, big game winter range, and elk security result in limitations on the timing, type, and amount of vegetation treatments.

Forest Plan direction limits management in grizzly bear management units (BMUs), especially within core areas. Timing, frequency, and size of treatments must be considered, thus minimizing the amount of acres that can be actively managed. Grizzly bear core areas are not suitable for timber production and timber harvest is limited in these areas. This results in fewer acres that can be treated to move vegetation towards desired condition. The effect is similar for all alternatives, reducing acres treated to improve vegetation.

With regard to whitebark pine, which is on the Region One sensitive species list and is a Candidate species for federal listing under the ESA, a significant percentage of whitebark pine sites on the KNF that are suitable for that tree species to grow are located in BMUs. In addition, most of the whitebark pine habitat on the KNF occurs in roadless areas (inventoried roadless areas, wilderness or wilderness study areas). In these areas, restoration activities for whitebark pine are logistically and economically challenging and often necessitate the use of helicopters and other motorized equipment (i.e., using helicopters to ignite prescribed burns or transport workers to plant trees, using chainsaws to thin-out other trees species from around existing whitebark pine trees). Because motorized equipment can disturb the bears, it could be time consuming and expensive to conduct the required environmental analysis and consultation with the USFWS in order to conduct a whitebark pine restoration project. This could decrease the number and scope of restoration projects that might otherwise occur on the Forest.

For lynx, all of the alternatives contain the NRLMD (USDA Forest Service 2007 March). One substantial impact this direction has on the forest vegetation is to limit the ability to pre-commercial thin (and other similar treatments) young forest stands. The effect is that in mixed stands, shade-intolerant tree species such as western larch may be outcompeted by shade-tolerant species in the absence of natural or man-caused disturbances. Since these tree species are very desirable due to their relative resistance to insects, disease, fire, and drought, and because of its long-lived nature, this effect is substantial. For whitebark pine, most of the suitable habitat for that tree species on the KNF also occurs in lynx habitat. Depending upon the circumstance, some of the management direction for lynx in the NRLMD may impact the ability to conduct restoration activities for whitebark pine.

As noted above, management requirements for lynx and grizzly bear would have some likely impacts on potential restoration efforts of whitebark pine for all alternatives. Even if a potential project could be accomplished given the overlapping wildlife management restrictions for those federally listed species, the high cost and time required for doing the environmental analysis may have the effect of discouraging such projects from taking place, and if they did occur, the expense of conducting them would likely take some resources away from some other restoration project. While it would be very difficult or impossible to quantify this impact, the effect of having habitat for threatened and endangered wildlife species overlapping most the whitebark pine sites would likely result in fewer and smaller restoration projects occurring for the whitebark pine on the KNF.

Another effect on vegetation from revised Forest Plan direction related to wildlife is the desire to maintain or provide old growth or stands with old forest structures for terrestrial species associated with these habitats. To accomplish this, there may be a need to prevent these stands

from being lost to stand-replacing wildfires. These stands currently tend to be distributed over most of the landscapes on the KNF, and it may be necessary to consider the level of risk to stands managed for old growth. By minimizing the loss of these types of stands, one effect to vegetation may be that natural, unplanned ignitions are suppressed more often, which could reduce the ability to achieve other aspects of the vegetation desired condition (such as increasing early-successional forests and shade-intolerant tree species). The 1987 Forest Plan contains a MA for old growth (MA13), with a standard that indicates that unplanned ignitions “will not be used in this MA.” Therefore, natural, unplanned ignitions would be suppressed if there was a risk of losing old growth stands. The action alternatives do not contain this direction. Therefore, natural, unplanned ignitions would likely be suppressed more often under Alternative A than they would under the other alternatives.

Management for big game winter range limits the amount of openings in these areas. When conducting timber harvest in winter range, the timing, silvicultural prescription, and size of openings must be consistent with objectives for winter range. In addition, the action alternatives contain direction for elk security. That direction not only affects motorized road access during hunting season, but it also could restrict the amount of the elk management units that are in an open condition. This elk security and big game winter range direction causes some limitation on the amount of acres that may be treated with timber harvest reducing the ability to move towards vegetation desired condition. These effects are similar for all alternatives.

#### **Effects from Fire Management**

Fire management using prescribed burning and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives generally has a positive effect on vegetation condition. Management direction in the revised Forest Plan emphasizes increased use of both prescribed and natural, unplanned ignitions to improve vegetative conditions. As discussed in the “General Effects” section, fire is generally beneficial to vegetation and is an important tool in moving vegetation towards desired condition. Compared to Alternative A, all of the Action Alternatives would utilize fire (both prescribed and natural, unplanned ignitions) to a much greater degree and that tool would improve the overall condition of the forest vegetation.

As described earlier in this document, fire suppression has a large effect on vegetation. In areas where wildland fire is suppressed, there will generally be less movement towards vegetation-desired condition. In lands within the WUI and near communities, a continued policy of heavy fire suppression will require that mechanical treatment methods be used in order to reduce hazardous fuels and trend the vegetation towards desired conditions. This effect is common to all alternatives.

#### **Effects from Watershed, Soil, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management**

The effects of watershed, soil, riparian and aquatic habitat management on upland forest vegetation are generally similar for all alternatives. All alternatives incorporate the direction from INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995). They also contain direction to protect watershed integrity and soil productivity which can place limitations on how much and where vegetation treatment activities may occur as well as whether or not road access is available for mechanical treatments. Although it is difficult to quantify the effects, the anticipated result is a limitation on the amount of activities that can be undertaken in order to trend the forest vegetation towards desired condition. Although it is difficult to quantify the effects, the anticipated result is a limitation on the amount of activities that can be undertaken in order to trend the forest vegetation towards desired condition.



### **Effects from Air Quality Management**

The consequences to forest vegetation from air quality related Forest Plan direction are the same for all alternatives. All alternatives have direction to meet air quality standards established by federal and state agencies and meet the requirements of state implementation plans and smoke management plans. The direction limits the use of prescribed fire to manage forest vegetation by limiting how much can be burned and when and where it can occur. The costs of conducting prescribed fires increases as a result of the burning regulations, which affect how much is burned. Limited use of prescribed fire affects the ability to move vegetation towards desired condition under all alternatives.

### **Effects from Mining**

There is one large-scale underground mine in operation on the Forest and two underground mines in the planning phase. These mines undergo site-specific NEPA to determine effects and required mitigation. The Troy mine is an underground silver and copper mine and has been in operation for many years. A reclamation plan is currently under development. The Rock Creek and the Montanore mines are proposed underground copper and silver mines. These proposed mines are undergoing site-specific NEPA analysis. The effect of these mines on vegetation is being determined at the project level. Generally, the impacts to the terrestrial vegetation components that are addressed in this section on forest vegetation that results from mining are very localized and at the scale of the Forest, they would be insignificant.

### ***Conclusion of Effects from the Alternatives on Forest Vegetation***

After considering the effects that the various alternatives would have on all of the individual components discussed above (e.g., dominance types, size class, landscape pattern, snags, insects/diseases), the overall conclusions can be made regarding how the alternatives would affect the forest vegetation.

Regardless of the budget scenario, Alternative B Modified would generally trend the forest vegetation towards the desired conditions to the greatest degree. Alternative C would trend the vegetation towards the desired conditions slightly less than would Alternative B Modified, but both Alternatives B Modified and C would be more beneficial than would Alternative D. Lastly, all of the Action Alternatives would improve the forest vegetation substantially more than would Alternative A.

If the KNF were to receive a level of funding similar to that which would be needed to implement the unconstrained budget scenario, then much more progress could be made in trending the forest vegetation towards the desired conditions compared to the current budget level. Given the assumption that budget levels will remain similar to those that the Forest has received in the recent past (i.e., assuming the constrained budget level), then only a small improvement would be made in trending the vegetation towards desired conditions.

### **Cumulative Effects**

The effects that past activities have had on all of the components of forest vegetation (e.g., forest composition and structure, landscape pattern, etc.) were discussed in the “Affected Environment” section and are reflected in the current condition of the forest vegetation. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, past activities are not carried forward into the following cumulative effects analysis. Present and foreseeable future activities that could affect forest vegetation are summarized below:

- **National Fire Plan, Healthy Forest Initiative, and Healthy Forest Restoration Act:** Since they were developed, these national level plans, initiatives, and acts (these are called "other plans" for the rest of this discussion) have influenced the vegetation and fuel management programs on the KNF. Therefore, they have had some effects on forest vegetation and it is anticipated that they will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. In general, these "other plans" have resulted in more hazardous fuel vegetation treatments in the vicinity of WUI areas and fewer vegetation treatments in areas located away from communities. In addition, the types of fuel treatments that are being done in response to these other plans are often more expensive, and the social issues (i.e., effects of treatments on scenery, air quality, noise, wildlife viewing, etc.) can be more contentious. Therefore, higher public involvement, planning, and implementation expenses are likely to lead to fewer acres being treated within a given budget level.
- **Northern Region Integrated Restoration and Protection Strategy:** The Northern Region of the Forest Service has been working on a strategy and decision support model to help identify opportunities and priorities for integrated restoration and protection activities throughout the Region. This strategy is a component of the larger regional climate change adaptation strategy. In the future, this strategy has the potential to influence program level decisions on the KNF by affecting where, when, and how forest vegetation treatments and protection activities occur. However, it is premature to speculate what the more specific effects may be once this strategy is being implemented.
- **Conservation Efforts for Whitebark Pine:** As discussed in the "Affected Environment" section, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently determined that this tree species warranted listing as a threatened or endangered species but that it was precluded due to higher priority species. The species is now designated as a federal Candidate species and Region One has placed the species on the Sensitive Species list. As described in USDA 2010, the forests in the region (including the KNF), have been implementing various restoration efforts for this species and these activities will likely continue or intensify (contingent upon funding). If the tree species is eventually listed as a federal threatened or endangered species, there could be effects to the vegetation and fire management programs on the KNF. Alternatives B Modified, C, and D contain Forest Plan components that stress the desire to increase the abundance and resiliency of this species to disturbances and stressors. If listed, there could be additional emphasis placed on restoration actions.

As described in the "Affected Environment" section, Keane et al. (2012) recently published a range-wide restoration strategy for this tree species. Although the KNF has a long history of implementing restoration projects for this tree, the comprehensive restoration strategy may have a beneficial impact of encouraging more efforts. However, as previously discussed the presence of habitat for wildlife species listed under the ESA makes planning and implementing activities very difficult.
- **Climate Change:** Of all of the ongoing and foreseeable future actions that have the potential to affect forest vegetation on the KNF, climate change is likely to be the single most important factor. The effects of climate change will likely combine with some of the effects that result from implementing the alternatives to produce cumulative impacts.

The potential effects (and uncertainties) that climate change may have on forest vegetation on the KNF are summarized in the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b). In general, given the existing condition of the forest vegetation on the KNF, the potential effects of climate change can be summarized as:

- Increase mountain pine beetle outbreaks in lodgepole pine and whitebark pine in relatively high elevation forests and a decrease at low-mid elevation;
- Increase in western pine beetle/mountain pine beetle mortality in ponderosa pine during droughts or otherwise under moisture stress;
- More root disease mortality and mortality from other insect/diseases during times of moisture stress;
- Longer fire seasons with more frequent large fires and more annual area burned; and
- Increase in the water balance deficit.

At the forestwide scale, the alternatives analyzed in this final EIS would generally add to the potential effects from climate change noted above. Alternative A would be the most affected and Alternatives B Modified and C the least affected by climate change. For all alternatives, the effects from climate change would be offset in those areas where vegetative treatments occur.

Climate change predictions for the Northern Rockies generally forecast warmer temperatures and longer, drier summers. If those predictions are correct, the effect of dense forests on the soil water balance could be compounded. In general, the soil water balance (especially in the summer droughty period) determines which tree species can ultimately survive on a specific site. Early seral tree species (e.g., ponderosa pine and western larch) have the unique ability to establish on bare soil surfaces where high surface temperatures exclude other species. One adaptation of these seral species is the deep rooting characteristic that allows the tree to find an adequate water supply and avoid extensive competition with shallow and fibrous rooted grasses and forbs. As the shade from these species limits shade-intolerant grasses and forbs, shade-tolerant tree species can become established in the understory. These species usually have shallower rooting characteristics that allow them to gather water from near the soil surface. The overall rooting structure on the site becomes much more competitive for water resources as succession progresses. As the density of the stand and the amount of leaf area increases, water transpiration increases, which in turn can deplete the water that is stored in the soil throughout the summer. The additional forest canopy interception of rain and snow which directly evaporates back into the atmosphere (snow sublimation) further compounds this effect and reduces soil water recharge. The end result is a water stressed forest, that not only becomes more susceptible to insect and disease, but also more prone to supporting severe wildfires because live fuel moisture is relatively low.

Whether it is invasive species (e.g., white pine blister rust), drought, uncharacteristic wildfires, elevated native insects and disease levels, unusually high forest densities, or some other agent or combination of agents that serves to stress trees and forest ecosystems; recent research suggests that climate change will likely exacerbate those stressors and “stress complexes” will continue to manifest themselves (Littell et al. 2010, McKenzie et al. 2009).

- **Human Population Increases and/or Shifts towards Wildland-Urban Interface:** For the last several decades, there has been more human development around the “edges” of lands administered by the KNF. This trend is expected to continue in the future and is likely to have effects on the forest vegetation that are similar to those discussed above under the item titled “National Fire Plan, Healthy Forest Initiative, and Healthy Forest Restoration Act.” In addition, with a greater number of people living and recreating in these wildland-urban interface areas, there is a greater probability of more human-caused wildfire ignitions that could have effects on the forest vegetation.

- **Increased Regulation and Concern over Smoke Emissions:** The ability to implement the vegetation treatments that would occur as a result of the alternatives is highly dependent upon prescribed burning (both associated with timber harvesting and without it) as well as using natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives. Therefore, to the extent that air quality regulations may become more stringent in regards to the quantity and timing of smoke emissions, there could be substantial effects in limiting vegetation treatments using prescribed burning.
- **Timber Product Manufacturing Infrastructure and Economics:** The ability of the KNF to positively affect the forest vegetation is partially dependent upon the ability to sell forest products to manufacturing companies and to use the harvesting processes, including residual slash disposal activities. If the forest products industry declines in areas surrounding the KNF to the degree that it is difficult to sell forest products, or if "stumpage prices" decrease significantly, it would affect how many acres could be treated. While some treatments could be accomplished by using prescribed burn-only treatments, it is generally too risky in the WUI and too expensive elsewhere.
- **Shared Border with Canada:** As described in more detail in the fire and fuels section of this FEIS, the northern portion of the KNF shares an international border with Canada (British Columbia). As such, there may be some impacts regarding the management of wildfires and whether or not the use of natural, unplanned ignitions is appropriate on the Forest when wildfires occur near the USA-Canadian border. As noted in the fire and fuels section, the general impact may be that some natural, unplanned ignitions that ignite on the KNF that may have otherwise been allowed to burn to meet resource objectives may become suppressed as a result of objectives or concerns raised by the Canadians. This could have a small negative impact on trending the forest vegetation on the KNF towards desired conditions, but the degree of this effect is unknown.

## Rare Plants

### Introduction

The Forest Service has a legal requirement to maintain or improve habitat conditions for threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species under the ESA. Species covered under ESA are those listed by the USDI, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Sensitive species are protected under the regional forester's Sensitive Species Program. The KNF is required to identify and mitigate potential effects to these species from federal land-disturbing actions. In order to comply with the ESA and the Sensitive Species Program, forest botanists conduct inventories during project planning to locate and protect any threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive plant species.

### Legal and Administrative Framework

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **The Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974:** Provides for maintenance of land productivity and the need to protect and improve the soil and water resources.
- **The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976:** "It is the policy of the Congress that all forested lands in the NFS shall be maintained in appropriate forest cover with species of trees, degree of stocking, rate of growth and conditions of stand designed to secure the maximum benefits of multiple use sustained yield. Plans developed shall provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet the overall multiple-use objectives, and within the multiple-use objective."
- **The Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973:** Requires federal agencies to conserve threatened and endangered species.

### Key Indicator

- Potential for adverse effects on rare plants from ground-disturbing activities or other applicable threats or stressors.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

The geographic scope of the analysis for effects to rare plants is the lands administered by the Forest. This area represents the NFS lands where changes may occur to rare plants or habitats from activities that result from the various alternatives. The rare plant species included in the analysis are those that are either listed under the ESA or are on the regional forester's Sensitive Species list. The known threats and/or stressors that have the potential to negatively affect the plant species were reviewed for each of seven plant habitat guilds. Potential adverse effects were considered based upon the likelihood and intensity to which the various alternatives may affect the threats/stressors.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

No threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate plant species are known to occur on NFS land within the KNF. However, one threatened plant species, *Silene spaldingii* (Spalding's catchfly), is "suspected" on the Forest. Suspected species are those that are believed to have potential to occur on the Forest, but to date, have not been found. The Spalding's catchfly is known to occur on private lands in the Tobacco Valley area near Eureka, Montana.

### *Spalding's Catchfly (Silene spaldingii)*

In 2001, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed *Silene spaldingii* as a threatened species (*Federal Register*, Vol. 66, No. 196, 2001). According to USFWS, the Spalding's catchfly is suspected to occur on the KNF, but to date no populations of have been found.

### **Habitat**

Spalding's catchfly, a perennial herb of the carnation family, is a Pacific Northwest regional endemic plant. The plant is typically found in mesic, perennial grasslands and is known to occur in 52 populations in west-central Idaho, eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, northwest Montana, and British Columbia. Populations are often small and isolated. Its habitat is primarily dry grassland habitats and grassland inclusions in ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest. Suitable habitat for this species is typically dominated by fescues (*Festuca* species), blue bunch wheat grass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), and other bunchgrasses, but also has a high density of forbs. Some sites may have shrubs such as *Symphoricarpos albus*, *Physocarpus malvaceus*, or *Rosa* spp. Soil types on which it has been found include loam, silty loam, granitic, loamy basaltic, and loess (Lorain 1991). Soils in its habitat are characterized as deep to moderately deep.

### **Threats**

Endangered Species Act section 7 guidelines for Spalding's catchfly list seven management activities that potentially threaten habitat or populations. They are grazing, recreation, fire use, exotic species, pollinator impacts, herbicide and pesticide use, and habitat conversion.

### *Sensitive Plant Species*

Sensitive plant species that are known or suspected to occur in the KNF are listed in table 21. Currently, there are 53 sensitive plant species that are known, or suspected to occur on the KNF. The regional forester establishes and maintains the sensitive plant list. In response to new or changed information on the plant species, the regional forester occasionally adds or removes species. Therefore, the list is dynamic and will undoubtedly change in the future.

Distribution, habitat information, and population data for each species are available from the Idaho Conservation Data Center, Washington Natural Heritage Program, Montana Natural Heritage Program, and NatureServe databases.

The 1987 Forest Plan direction for sensitive and rare species, including plants, is to manage habitat to maintain population viability, to prevent the need for federal listing, and to determine the status and distribution of threatened, endangered, sensitive, and other rare plants. Habitat found to be suitable within project areas, and which could be affected by project-related activities, is surveyed to determine the presence of rare plant species. Protection measures are implemented to provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities following the NFMA and Forest Service policy.

**Table 21. Rare Plant Species, Status, Occurrence, and Habitat Guilds on the KNF**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status <sup>1</sup>	Occurrence <sup>2</sup>	Habitat Guild <sup>3</sup>
<i>Amerorchis rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved orchis	S	K	M
<i>Allium acuminatum</i>	Tapertip onion	S	K	D
<i>Bidens beckii</i>	Water marigold	S	K	A
<i>Blechnum spicant</i>	Deer fern	S	S	M
<i>Botrychium ascendens</i>	Upswept moonwort	S	K	M
<i>Botrychium crenulatum</i>	Dainty moonwort	S	H	M
<i>Botrychium hesperium</i>	Western moonwort	S	K	M
<i>Botrychium paradoxum</i>	Paradox moonwort	S	K	C
<i>Botrychium pedunculatum</i>	Stalked moonwort	S	K	M
<i>Brasenia schreberi</i>	Watershield	S	K	A
<i>Carex amplifolia</i>	Big-leaf sedge	S	K	M
<i>Carex chordorrhiza</i>	String-root sedge	S	K	A
<i>Carex prairea</i>	Prairie sedge	S	K	P
<i>Carex rostrata</i>	Beaked sedge	S	K	A
<i>Carex vaginata</i>	Sheathed sedge	S	K	DR
<i>Clarkia rhomboidea</i>	Common clarkia	S	K	D
<i>Collema curtisporum</i>	Short-spored jelly lichen	S	K	DR
<i>Corydalis sempervirens</i>	Pink corydalis	S	K	D
<i>Cypripedium fasciculatum</i>	Clustered lady's-slipper	S	K	D
<i>Cypripedium parviflorum</i>	Small Yellow lady's-slipper	S	S	DR
<i>Cypripedium passerinum</i>	Sparrow's-egg lady's-slipper	S	K	DR
<i>Drosera anglica</i>	English sundew	S	K	P
<i>Drosera linearis</i>	Slender-leaf sundew	S	S	P, C
<i>Dryopteris cristata</i>	Crested shield fern	S	K	P
<i>Epipactis gigantea</i>	Giant helleborine	S	S	P
<i>Eriophorum gracile</i>	Slender cotton grass	S	K	P
<i>Eriophorum viridicatum</i>	Green keeled cottongrass	S	S	P
<i>Eupatorium occidentale</i>	Western joe-pye weed	S	S	C
<i>Gentianopsis simplex</i>	Hiker's gentian	S	S	A, DR
<i>Grimmia brittoniae</i>	Britton's dry rock moss	S	K	D, M
<i>Grindelia howellii</i>	Howell's gumweed	S	S	D
<i>Heterocodon rariflorum</i>	Western pearl flower	S	K	D
<i>Lathyrus bijugatus</i>	Tule pea	S	K	D
<i>Lomatium geyeri</i>	Geyer's bisquit root	S	K	P
<i>Lycopodiella inundata</i>	Northern bog clubmoss	S	S	P
<i>Lycopodium dendroideum</i>	Ground pine club moss	S	K	C, DR, M
<i>Lycopodium lagopus</i>	One-cone clubmoss	S	S	M
<i>Meesia triquetra</i>	Meesia moss	S	K	P
<i>Mimulus ampliatus</i>	Stalk-leaved monkey flower	S	K	M
<i>Mimulus breviflorus</i>	Shortflower monkey flower	S	K	M
<i>Mimulus clivicola</i>	Bank monkey-flower	S	S	D

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status <sup>1</sup>	Occurrence <sup>2</sup>	Habitat Guild <sup>3</sup>
<i>Nodobryoria subdivergens</i>	Old man's beard	S	K	S
<i>Ophioglossum pusillum</i>	Northern adder's tongue	S	H	P
<i>Phegopteris connectilis</i>	Northern beechfern	S	K	M
<i>Pinus albicaulis</i>	Whitebark pine	S	K	C
<i>Psilocarphus brevissimus</i>	Dwarf wooly heads	S	K	A
<i>Scheuchzeria palustris</i>	Pod grass	S	K	P
<i>Schoenoplectus subterminalis</i>	Water clubrush	S	K	A
<i>Scorpidium scorpioides</i>	Scorpidium moss	S	K	P
<i>Silene spaldingii</i>	Spalding's catchfly	T	S	D
<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	Tufted club rush	S	K	A, DR
<i>Utricularia intermedia</i>	Flat-leaved bladderwort	S	K	A
<i>Viola selkirkii</i>	Selkirk's violet	S	K	M

<sup>1</sup> Status: S = Sensitive; T = Threatened; E = Endangered

<sup>2</sup> Occurrence: K = Known; S = Suspected; H = Historically Known

<sup>3</sup> Habitat Guild: A = Aquatic, P = Peatland, DR = Deciduous Riparian, M = Moist Forest, D = Dry Forest, C = Cold Forest & Forested Subalpine, S = Subalpine Grassland

### Potential Threats

Threats are defined as activities (Forest Service or otherwise) or natural conditions that currently or potentially have negative effects on the diversity of rare plant communities or their habitat. Threats can be divided into the following three types: direct (e.g., livestock grazing (trampling), herbivory, recreational activities (hiking and associated trampling)), alteration of ecological factors (e.g., fire exclusion, insects, and disease), and habitat reduction (e.g., oil and gas exploration, road construction, and reconstruction). Refer to the specialist report for a more inclusive list of examples for each of these three threats.

### Habitat Guilds or Groups

Each of the KNF rare plant species listed in table 21 was placed into appropriate habitat groups, or guilds. The term “guild” is used to mean a group of species that use similar resources in a similar way. These guilds include the following: aquatic, peatland, deciduous riparian, moist forest, dry forest, cold forest, and subalpine. Each of these guilds is briefly discussed below (see Specialist Report for more detailed discussion).

#### *Aquatic Plant Species Guild*

The aquatic plant habitat guild contains nine sensitive species.

Several key stressors generally apply to most members of this species group. These include boating activities, lake shore development, aquatic non-native invasive species (especially *Phalaris arundinacea*), use of aquatic herbicides, agricultural practices, grazing and aquatic vegetation succession. Alteration of hydrologic regimes; either directly from drainage, ditching, and dam construction (or beaver dam removal); or indirectly from upland activities or events such as timber harvest, road construction, and wildfire are also potential stressors.

Stressors beyond Forest Service control include short- and long-term climate change (which may increase the risk of desiccation due to increased and prolonged summer temperatures and/or drought conditions) and activities as described above that occur on non-federal lands. These



changes or activities could result in altered hydrologic regimes and/or species composition that may affect the persistence of aquatic group plant species.

#### *Peatland Plant Species Guild*

This species guild is composed of 13 sensitive plant species and is all nearly or completely restricted to peatland habitats; in numerous cases they co-occur at known peatland sites and the stressors and ecological processes that influence their habitats apply to all of them.

All of the peatlands on the KNF are fens, although there are instances where microsites with bog characteristics occur within the fens; such cases are referred to as mixed mires (Chadde et al. 1998). These fen habitats can be further divided into five distinct sub-guilds that are characterized by different plant communities and species, different substrates, different pH, and different abiotic processes. Although the sub-guilds are distinct, individual peatland complexes often contain a mosaic of sub-guilds that grade into one another (poor fens, ombrotrophic bog, intermediate and rich fens, paludified forests, and shrub-carr). The sub-guilds are described in more detail in the Specialist Report in the project record.

#### *Deciduous Riparian Plant Species Guild*

This species guild contains seven sensitive species.

The following stressors may have direct or indirect effects on plant species in deciduous riparian habitats:

- Management actions that alter hydrologic regimes;
- Alterations to riparian plant community succession through vegetation manipulation;
- Changes to natural disturbance regimes such as flooding;
- Management activities that affect water quality: such as road construction, reconstruction, and maintenance activities that result in runoff, livestock use, fertilizer application, and sedimentation from timber harvest activities;
- Invasive plant species;
- Off highway vehicle (OHV) use around wet margins of riparian areas; and
- Recreation use in and adjacent to riparian areas.

One stressor beyond Forest Service control includes long- and short-term climate change, which may increase the risk of desiccation due to increased and prolonged summer temperatures and/or drought conditions; and may alter the hydrologic regimes and floodplain dynamics that are important in the habitat of these species.

#### *Wet and Moist Forest Plant Species Guild*

This species guild contains nine sensitive species.

Key stressors affecting this species guild include timber harvest (especially regeneration of late seral and old growth cedar and hemlock forests), prescribed fire, road and trail construction, and other activities that could impact populations either directly through loss of individuals or indirectly through canopy removal or ground disturbance that disrupts soil mycorrhizae. Air pollution and removal of large, old trees may negatively affect lichens in this species group.

Stressors beyond Forest Service control include short- and long-term climate change (which may increase the risk of desiccation due to increased and prolonged summer temperatures and/or

drought conditions), and activities as described above that occur or originate on other ownership lands.

#### *Dry Forest Plant Species Guild*

This species guild consists of one federally listed threatened plant species and eight sensitive species. The federally listed species (*Silene spaldingii*) is not currently known to occur on the KNF, but suitable habitat is present and there is known occurrences near NFS lands.

Key stressors that affect this species guild include timber harvest, prescribed fire, severe wildfire, fire suppression efforts, grazing, and OHV use; all of which may directly or indirectly impact populations through ground disturbance, canopy removal, destruction of soil mycorrhizae, or increased risk of noxious weed invasion. Dry-forest and open-forest grassland habitats are relatively rare vegetation types on the KNF, and the effects of these various stressors may be exacerbated in some areas as a result. Long-term fire exclusion and grazing exclusion may have detrimental effects on *Silene spaldingii* (Spalding's catchfly); the one federally listed threatened plant species in this group.

One stressor beyond Forest Service control includes short- and long-term climate change, which may increase the risk of desiccation due to increased and prolonged summer temperatures and/or drought conditions.

#### *Cold and Forested Subalpine Plant Species Guild*

Five sensitive species are assigned to the cold plant guilds.

Key stressors affecting this species guild include timber harvest, prescribed fire, road and trail construction, and other activities that could directly impact populations through vegetation and/or ground disturbance.

#### *Subalpine Grassland Plant Species Guild*

This species guild occurs in the non-forested portions of the subalpine zone and includes one sensitive species.

Several management activities and risks may have direct or indirect effects on rare plants in this species guild. These include disturbance associated with recreation use, trail construction (including blasting of rock), maintenance of fire lookouts and other administrative sites, and harvesting of special forest products. Invasion of exotic plant species may affect some rocky sites, but generally the harshness of these habitats inhibits complete dominance by such species.

One stressor beyond Forest Service control includes climate change, which may result in changes to snow amounts and distribution that affect these habitats. The possibility of desiccation due to increased and prolonged summer temperatures or drought conditions is also a potential stressor resulting from climate change, although the subalpine parks currently occupy areas that are subject to a higher degree of summer soil drying compared to surrounding sites (Roche and Busacca 1987).

### Environmental Consequences

#### *Forestwide Direction for all Alternatives*

Threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species have special management requirements for all Forest Service management activities. The ESA section 7 guidelines and recovery

objectives have been followed where potential habitat for the two threatened plant species suspected to occur on the Forest.

For sensitive species, management efforts to ensure the diversity of rare plant communities or their habitat are already in place. The Forest Service management policy (FSH 2609.25, 1.25, 1988 and FSM 2670) ensures that for all rare plant species, the following measures will be taken:

- (1) Biological evaluations will be written for all activities that may affect sensitive species and their habitat;
- (2) “Effects” of activities will be determined as similar to those for threatened, endangered, or proposed species; and
- (3) Special management emphasis will be included in all management activities to ensure the viability of the sensitive species and to preclude trends toward endangerment that would result in the need for federal listing. This Forest Service management policy will be employed at a species level in all alternatives to ensure its mandates are achieved and that sensitive species are conserved.

All of the alternatives implement the protection measures noted above for law, regulation, and policy. In addition, all of the alternatives (including Alternative A) retain INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995) as Forest Plan direction (revised Plan FW-STD-RIP-03). INFISH contains riparian management objectives for habitat conservation areas and a comprehensive set of standards and guidelines related to what kind of activities may or may not occur within the riparian areas. Although they were not specifically designed to do so, many of the standards and guidelines of INFISH serve as protection measures for rare plants that are associated with aquatic and/or riparian habitats, of which there are many. In addition, all action alternatives include management direction to evaluate proposed management activities and project areas for the presence of occupied or suitable habitat for “any plant species listed under the ESA or on the regional sensitive species list. If needed, conduct field review and provide mitigation or protection to maintain high-quality occurrences (those in intact, sustainable habitats) over time (FW-GDL-VEG-07).” This management direction ensures that surveys would be conducted and any protection measures applied, thereby reducing the potential for adverse effects.

#### *Consequences to Rare Plants from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

##### **Effects from Management Area Direction**

At the scale of the entire KNF, it is important to realize the difficulties associated with assessing the impacts of broad Forest Plan direction to 47 rare plants. Plant species may be rare due to evolutionary history, basic population ecology, historic or current human activities, or more likely, a complex combination of these factors. Human activities may or may not be responsible for the current distribution and abundance of the rare plant species. However, an important assumption in this analysis is that certain management actions may contribute or detract from the availability or quality of habitats that support rare plant species.

Alternative A retains all of the 1987 Forest Plan direction regarding the management of vegetation, including rare plants. Forestwide goal #6 includes the desire to provide for the environmental needs of sensitive species, as necessary to prevent them from becoming threatened (Plan p.II-1). All of the 1987 Forest Plan direction is required as part of the laws, regulations, and policies previously mentioned.

In Alternatives B Modified, C, and D, MA1a and 1b, MA3 – Botanical Areas, and MA4 – Research Natural Areas would not allow certain management activities (e.g., timber harvest, grazing, motor vehicle use, road construction) which are considered threats to rare plants (see standards and guidelines for each MA in the revised Forest Plan). This direction is the same under each action alternative.

#### **Effects from Specific Forest Plan Management Direction for Alternatives B Modified, C, and D**

Forest Plan components that are relevant to rare plants are the same for each action alternative. Vegetation forestwide Goal-01 articulates the desire to have plant communities with high ecological integrity and exhibiting resiliency towards natural and man-caused disturbances. In addition, numerous forestwide desired conditions (i.e., FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, and 11) for vegetation express the desire to trend the forest vegetation towards a more resilient condition with a high degree of ecological integrity. The management direction recognizes the need to maintain and/or improve the populations of the rare plants as well as the ecological roles and functions that they serve.

Action alternatives also contain specific components for rare plants (FW-DC-VEG-09, GDL-VEG-07) that address the need for field review and identification of mitigation and/or protection measures for site-specific proposed projects. This last guidance is also part of Forest Service Handbook and Manual direction (FSH 2609.25, FSM 2670).

Action alternatives also contain numerous forestwide goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines with regard to riparian and aquatic resources. Many of those Forest Plan components are designed to maintain or restore riparian conditions and aquatic resources. Many of the rare plants on the KNF are associated with these types of habitats, and would benefit from implementing Forest Plan components related to riparian and aquatic resources (i.e., FW-GDL-RIP-05).

#### **Effects from Fire (Prescribed Fire, the use of Natural, Unplanned Ignitions, and Wildfires) Management**

All of the alternatives use fire as a tool to accomplish management goals and objectives. The alternatives have different management emphasis areas and as such, the use and emphasis of fire vary by alternative. The biggest difference between the alternatives in this regard is that of Alternative A compared to the others. The use of fire as a management tool was not emphasized in the 1987 KNF Forest Plan, in general, with regard to using natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives. There are a number of barriers that prevented the KNF from using that tool very often. Therefore, compared to the other alternatives, it is assumed that Alternative A would involve much less prescribed burning as well as the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives. In considering the action alternatives, Alternative D has more emphasis on active management and commodity production than the others, while Alternative C has the least. Therefore, in general, it is assumed that of the action alternatives, Alternative D would involve more prescribed burning, while Alternative C would rely more heavily on the use of natural, unplanned ignitions as a management tool to help trend the forest vegetation towards the desired condition. In that regard, Alternative B Modified would fall between C and D.

Another factor that is important to some rare plants is the timing of burns. For example, the use of prescribed fire in the spring has potential impacts to some rare plants. In general, these plants are not adapted to fire at this time of year and spring burning can interfere with flowering, fruiting, and other physiological impacts; and could affect life history patterns with pollinators.

However, those risks have to be weighed against the trade-offs in the event that prescribed burning could not take place at another time of year. Therefore, a higher risk occurs that an uncharacteristically intense wildfire occurs. Wild and prescribed fires can pose risks to those rare plants in the wet/moist and dry forest plant groups, particularly when the fires are uncharacteristic. In general, most plant species would benefit by the restoration of more historical fire regimes. For those rare plants that thrive in open areas created by fires, using fire to help restore a more natural fire regime could benefit those species in the long-term. There are also impacts to plants associated with wildfire suppression activities, such as fire line construction and other mechanical activities, reforestation following fire, and the increased potential for the spread of noxious weeds.

### **Effects from Recreational Management**

Recreation impacts can include trampling, both by hikers and off-road vehicle use. Road building and the development of campgrounds and other facilities used by recreationists also contribute to plant impacts, as these developments make more areas accessible and concentrate use. Dispersed camping and recreation have similar impacts, which are more difficult to monitor. Parking areas, particularly undesignated areas, pose similar impacts to plants. In addition, there can be long-term impacts of bisecting a rare plant population with a road or similar feature and affecting the reproduction and/or plant dispersal. Other recreational impacts include off-road vehicle use, which can also disturb soil, affecting both habitat and potential habitat. Roads and trails for recreational use can contribute to the spread of noxious weeds and increase the accessibility of areas to livestock as well as native ungulates, which in turn can increase the impacts of trampling, herbivory, and congregation. Because some alternatives, for example, Alternative D, includes the potential for a higher level of recreational use, especially associated with motorized recreation, there are differences between alternatives on this factor. Action alternatives also contain specific components for rare plants (FW-DC-VEG-09, GDL-VEG-07) that address the need for field review and identification of mitigation and/or protection measures for site-specific proposed projects.

### **Effects from Vegetation Management**

Mechanical activities include vegetation management treatments, whether for restoration or to meet timber production objectives. Activities, such as logging, can have impacts to plants and plant habitat through canopy removal, soil disturbance and erosion, and stream sedimentation. In addition, mechanical activities for vegetation treatment may require road building. Roads increase access to and fragment habitat, thus, providing an avenue for invasive plant species. They can be placed on ridgetops, in riparian areas, or through scree slopes, which are important habitats for a number of species. Reconstruction and maintenance of existing roads can directly or indirectly affect plant populations by introducing competitive weeds and altering availability of light, nutrients, and moisture. Sudden changes in seral stage, or an abundance of early seral stages, also reduce the available habitats for those plants that require mid-to-late seral stages. However, those species that prefer openings, early-seral stages, or some ground disturbance, could benefit from moderate levels of mechanical activities. As discussed above in fire, the restoration of historical fire regimes and restoration of conditions towards HRV with a range of seral stages for different potential vegetation groups may benefit some rare species in the long-term. With regard to the various alternatives, Alternative D is expected to have the greatest amount of mechanical activities and alternative C the least. Alternative A and B Modified would be fairly similar. The management direction includes a guideline to evaluate proposed management activities and project areas for the presence of occupied or suitable habitat for “any plant species listed under the ESA or on the regional sensitive species list. If needed, conduct

field review and provide mitigation or protection to maintain high-quality occurrences (those in intact, sustainable habitats) over time (FW-GDL-VEG-07).”

### **Effects from Non-native Invasive Plants**

Introduced, invasive plant species can displace rare species through competitive displacement. Indirect impacts include herbicide spraying and mechanical ground disturbance to control noxious weeds once they gain a foothold. Competition from invasive non-native species and noxious weeds can result in the loss of habitat, loss of pollinators, and decreased rare plant species viability. Roads, trails, livestock, and canopy reduction can provide ideal pathways for the introduction of exotic and non-native species. Indirectly, herbicide spraying can destroy populations of native pollinators by contaminating nesting materials and pollen resources, further decreasing the viability and reproductive success of rare species. Regarding the risk of weed invasions and/or expansion of populations, the alternatives would vary in some ways. In general, the more emphasis the alternative has on active management the greater the likelihood of weed spread. All action alternatives contain a forestwide desired condition that states “new invasive plant species are treated and populations are contained or eradicated. Integrated pest management approaches are used, including best management practices (BMPs) that limit introduction, intensification and spread due to management activities. Areas requiring re-vegetation use locally adapted, native plant species where feasible and appropriate. Agreements with cooperative weed MAs assist in noxious weed and invasive plants control across jurisdictional boundaries” (FW-DC-VEG-10). Alternative D, with its emphasis on active management, would be expected to have the greatest impacts on weeds; and at the other end of the spectrum, Alternative C would be expected to have the least impacts. The other alternatives fall between those two extremes.

### **Effects on Aquatic, Peatland, and Deciduous Riparian Species Guilds**

These three habitat guilds will be analyzed together as they generally have similar types of threats for the rare plant that occur within them. Within these three guilds there are 28 sensitive species. Hydrologic and/or nutrient alternations are the two most important impacts that could occur to plants within these guilds. Mechanical vegetation treatments, off-road vehicles, roads and trails, grazing, and catastrophic wildfires are the most likely causes of Forest Service activities that could affect the hydrologic regimes or nutrient inputs. However, as previously mentioned the INFISH standards, guidelines, and other direction provide a fairly high level of protection for rare plants in these guilds. Those protections are in affect for all the alternatives. The action alternatives have additional protection measures and an increased emphasis on the restoration and maintenance of riparian and aquatic resources. Probably the most substantial risk to the plants in these guilds that has not been mitigated by INFISH or the other aquatic/riparian direction associated with the action alternatives, is the risk of a wildfire burning a large area and affecting either the hydrologic regime or nutrient inputs into these habitats. In comparing the action alternatives, Alternative C would likely pose the largest risk to plants in these guilds. Alternative C would rely heavily on fires to help trend the vegetation towards desired condition; and the use of a high level of prescribed fire or natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives has risks associated with it getting larger and/or more intense than desired. A large fire covering substantial area in these habitat guilds could make substantial changes in above and below ground water flows as well as nutrient inputs.

### ***Effects on Wet and Moist Forest Plant Species Guild***

On the KNF, 14 sensitive species are assigned to either the wet or moist forest guild. Of the potential threats to plants in this guild, possible impacts from mechanical activities, fire, and

noxious weeds are the most important. Many of the plants in this guild are somewhat sensitive to reductions in tree canopy cover and/or soil disturbance and many are commonly located in older late seral mature or old growth type forest stands. Because one of the general forest vegetation desired conditions is to increase the amount of old growth in the future, there may be more of this habitat in the future, barring large landscape scale wildfires.

Alternative D, because of the emphasis on an increased level of active management, is likely to have the greatest potential impact on rare plants in this guild. The plants in the wet guild would likely be protected from impacts from mechanical activities, due to the INFISH and/or aquatic and riparian Forest Plan components discussed earlier. In addition, the required field surveying that is conducted for projects would likely locate many of the populations and mitigation/protection measures would be established on a project specific basis. Relative to Alternative D, the risk of negatively affecting rare plants in these guilds is less for Alternative C, and Alternatives A and B Modified would rank between the other two.

#### *Effects on Dry Forest Plant Species Guild*

Eight sensitive species, and one federally listed threatened species (Spalding's catchfly), are grouped together in this dry forest species guild. As noted previously, there are no known populations of the Spalding's catchfly on the KNF; however, potential habitat does exist. The threats associated with the rare plants in this guild are fire (both from fire suppression efforts as well as prescribed fire or natural, unplanned ignitions), mechanical activities, grazing, and OHV recreation. Because field surveys are conducted for proposed activities, such as the use of prescribed fire and mechanical activities, the risk of harm from those causes is likely fairly low (FW-GDL-VEG-07). Greater risks likely exist due to wildfires burning under uncharacteristically intense conditions. Regarding the various alternatives, Alternative C, with less active management and its reliance on more fire, probably has a greater chance of causing negative effects to plants in this guild than do the other alternatives.

#### *Effects on Cold and Forested Subalpine Plant Species Guild*

Five sensitive plant species occurs in this guild. Threats to this plant are primarily mechanical activities and fire. Forestwide guideline FW-GDL-VEG-07 would be applied under all action alternatives prior to trail construction or maintenance activities. Alternative D, with its greater emphasis on active management, would likely pose more risk to this plant than would the other alternatives.

#### *Effects on Subalpine Grassland Plant Species Guild*

Only one sensitive plant species occurs in this subalpine grassland guild, the old man's beard. Because this plant is primarily located at high elevations they tend to occur in IRAs, designated or recommended wilderness areas, or other remote locations. Trail construction or maintenance might affect this species, but probably the greatest threat is climate change. Forestwide guideline FW-GDL-VEG-07 would be applied under all action alternatives prior to trail construction or maintenance activities.

#### *Cumulative Effects*

The analysis area for cumulative effects includes all ownerships that comprise the KNF. There are no cumulative effects from the decisions we are making in the revised Forest Plan except for past actions.

Under the influence of changing climate, if droughts and warmer winters continue, agents such as mountain pine beetle, Douglas-fir beetle, Western balsam bark beetle, and spruce beetle will likely show increased levels of activity. Fires are likely to increase in intensity under climatic influence if droughts continue and weather favorable to high intensity fire develops.

#### *Effects Determination*

Based on the analysis of all alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, other interrelated and interconnected activities, and the cumulative effects of other federal and non-federal activities within the Planning Area, it has been determined that the implementation of the No Action Alternative or the other Action Alternatives would have **No Effect** on Spalding's Catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*).

Regarding those plant species that are listed by the regional forester as being sensitive (including the newly listed whitebark pine), implementing any of the alternatives **may impact individuals or their habitat, but would not likely result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability**. The effects analysis provided in this document and within the rare plant and forest vegetation specialist reports (located in the project record), meet the requirements for a biological evaluation as outlined in FSM 2672.42.



## *Non-native Invasive Plants*

### Introduction

Non-native plants are species that do not have their origin in a local area. They have not adapted to or evolved with the local environment, which means there are no natural enemies. Non-native plants include both exotics and noxious weeds. Exotic plants are species that have been introduced to an area, usually from a different continent. They may have been introduced inadvertently or intentionally.

### Legal and Administrative Framework

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974:** States that each federal agency shall establish and adequately fund an undesirable plant management program; complete and implement cooperative agreements with state agencies regarding the management of undesirable plant species on federal lands under the agency's jurisdiction; and establish an integrated management system to control or contain undesirable plant species targeted under cooperative agreements.
- **Executive Order 13112:** Directs federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species; detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally-sound manner; to monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; to provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded; to conduct research on invasive species and develop technologies to prevent introduction; to provide for environmentally sound control of invasive species; and to promote public education on invasive species and the means to address them. All of these actions are subject to the availability of appropriations.
- **State of Montana County Noxious Weed Management Act:** States that it is unlawful for any person to permit any noxious weed to propagate or go to seed on the person's land, except that any person who adheres to the noxious weed management program of the person's weed management district or who has entered into and is in compliance with a noxious weed management agreement is considered to be in compliance with this section. The KNF has entered into an agreement with Lincoln County.
- **Idaho Noxious Weed Law:** States that it is unlawful for any individual to allow noxious weeds to propagate or go to seed on their land unless they are complying with an approved weed management plan. This law directs the counties to develop weed control districts to plan and implement weed control efforts. The law also directs district (county) weed boards to "make all reasonable efforts to develop and implement a noxious weed program covering all land within the district owned or administered by a federal agency."

### Key Indicator

- Level of ground disturbing activities (e.g., timber harvesting, road and trail construction/reconstruction, fire suppression, grazing) and wildland fire (both prescribed fire and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives).

### Methodology and Analysis Process

A weed risk assessment was conducted to evaluate the current risk of 20 species of weeds spreading and harming native plant communities. The methodology for that assessment is documented in project file records. The evaluation of how alternatives may impact the risk of

new weed introductions and the spread of existing weeds was based primarily on what the relative opportunities are for ground disturbing activities and wildfire.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

The Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974 defines a federal noxious weed as a “foreign origin as is new to or not widely prevalent within the United States, and can directly or indirectly injure crops... fish and wildlife resources or the public health.” Federal noxious weeds are specified as aquatic weeds, parasitic weeds, or terrestrial weeds. For the purpose of the management of noxious weeds on Forest Service lands, noxious weeds are considered to be “Those plant species designated as noxious weeds by the Secretary of Agriculture or by the responsible state official. Noxious weeds generally possess one or more of the following characteristics: aggressive and difficult to manage, poisonous, toxic, parasitic, a carrier or host of serious insects or disease, and being native or new to or not common to the United States or parts thereof” (FSM 2080.5).

Most introduced species never became pests as they could not thrive without special care or they did not compete well with native vegetation; therefore, they remained confined to gardens or agricultural fields. Some even became valuable crop or landscaping plants. However, in the absence of competitors and natural enemies with which they evolved, a few exotic species spread and dominated to the detriment of native vegetation. For example, knapweed came into the United States from Eurasia in clover and alfalfa seed. Oxeye daisy was spread around the northwest in forage grass and legume seed after its introduction in the late 1800s. Intentional introductions have brought invasive weeds into the area as well. Common St. John's-wort seed was brought with English and German settlers as seed for gardens. Dalmatian toadflax came from Europe as an ornamental, as did orange hawkweed and absinth wormwood.

Noxious weeds are plant species designated by law that can have detrimental effects on agriculture, commerce, or public health. They spread aggressively and are difficult to manage. These species are generally new or not common to the United States. Noxious weeds generally present the most immediate and disruptive threat to ecosystems.

Noxious weeds, classified as invaders, pose the greatest threat as these plants are capable of becoming established in undisturbed or relatively undisturbed areas and have the ability to spread quickly over large areas. Spotted knapweed, diffuse knapweed, yellow star thistle, leafy spurge, and dyer's woad are examples of invaders. These infestations can substantially change the biological diversity of areas by influencing the amount and distribution of native plants and animals; and negatively affect recreational experiences, forest regeneration, wildlife and livestock forage, soil productivity, fire regimes, and riparian and hydrologic function.

Various recreational and management activities that occur on the KNF have the potential to disperse noxious weeds or increase the likelihood that they will become established at a given site. This increase in dispersal and establishment is above what would happen naturally as a result of seed transport by wind, water, or wildlife.

Current control efforts are aimed at eradicating new invaders (table 22) and containing existing infestations. Every known site occupied by a new invader species is treated and monitored. Logging equipment is cleaned before entering a sale area to reduce the potential for the introduction of weed species not yet present in a sale area. Tactics used to attempt to contain large infestations include spraying roadsides, seeding major disturbances caused by road and skidtrail building and landing piles, and treating gravel pits. Biocontrols have been released for spotted knapweed, dalmatian toadflax, St. John's wort, tansy ragwort, and Canada thistle.

Infestations in some sites have been reduced by these measures. However, in spite of these control efforts existing infestations continue to invade disturbed areas and intact plant communities.

On the KNF, it is fairly common to see noxious weeds along many roadsides, railroad and utility rights-of-way, and other disturbed areas, such as gravel pits. Spotted knapweed, tansy ragwort, rush skeleton weed, and other weed species have migrated away from the road right-of-way onto undisturbed hillsides, especially within the drier vegetation types. Orange hawkweed has an increased presence on moist habitat types under full canopies and is converging on the edges of the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness. Weeds are also becoming established in harvest units where the seeds have been brought by machinery and other vectors such as wildlife, cattle, railcars, and/or wind. In 2007, the KNF completed an integrated weed management plan for the Forest. Table 22 lists the noxious weeds that are known to occur on the KNF, as well as potential invaders. Plants listed in 22 as a potential invader (noted as PI in the table), are those that have not yet been located on the Forest, but are known to be in the general area and are considered potential invaders. The management goal for those potential invaders is to prevent them from becoming established, and if found, eradicate them promptly. For the new invaders that are identified in the table (noted as NI in the table), there is a goal of eradicating any small infestations and reducing the larger ones. Lastly, for those plants that are recognized as widespread weeds (noted as WS in the table), the goal is to contain them inside areas that are already infested and reduce the plant populations.

**Table 22. Non-native Invasive Plant Species of Concern on the KNF**

Scientific Name	Common Name	PI=Potential Invader, NI=New Invader, WS=Widespread Invader		
		PI	NI	WS
<i>Anchusa officinalis</i>	Bugloss		X	
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Common burdock			X
<i>Artemisia absinthium</i>	Absinth wormwood			X
<i>Berteroa incana</i>	Hoary alyssum	X		
<i>Bromus tectorum</i>	Cheatgrass			X
<i>Bryonia alba</i>	White briony		X	
<i>Butomus umbellatus</i>	Flowering rush	X		
<i>Cardaria draba</i>	Whitetop (hoarycress)		X	
<i>Carduus acanthoides</i>	Plumeless thistle	X		
<i>Carduus nutans</i>	Musk thistle		X	
<i>Centaurea diffusa</i>	Diffuse knapweed			X
<i>Centaurea maculosa</i>	Spotted knapweed			X
<i>Centaurea pratensis</i>	Meadow knapweed		X	
<i>Centaurea repens</i>	Russian knapweed		X	
<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>	Yellow starthistle	X		
<i>Chaenorrhinum minus</i>	Dwarf snapdragon		X	
<i>Chondrilla juncea</i>	Rush skeletonweed		X	
<i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i>	Oxeye daisy			X
<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	Chicory		X	

Scientific Name	Common Name	PI=Potential Invader, NI=New Invader, WS=Widespread Invader		
		PI	NI	WS
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Canada thistle			X
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Poison-hemlock		X	
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field bindweed			X
<i>Crupina vulgaris</i>	Common crupina	X		
<i>Cynoglossum officinale</i>	Common hound's-tongue			X
<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Scot's broom		X	
<i>Echium vulgare</i>	Blueweed		X	
<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>	Russian olive		X	
<i>Euphorbia esula</i>	Leafy spurge		X	
<i>Hieracium aurantiacum</i>	Orange hawkweed			X
<i>Hieracium piloselloides</i> <i>Hieracium caespitosum</i> , <i>Hieracium floribundum</i> , <i>Hieracium pretens</i>	Meadow hawkweed complex			X
<i>Hieracium pratense</i>	Yellow hawkweed			X
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Common St. John's-wort			X
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Spotted cat's-ear		X	
<i>Isatis tinctoria</i>	Dyer's woad	X		
<i>Kochia scoparia</i>	Kochia		X	
<i>Linaria dalmatica</i>	Dalmatian toadflax		X	
<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Yellow toadflax		X	
<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>	Purple loosestrife	X		
<i>Matricaria maritima agrestis</i>	Scentless chamomile		X	
<i>Myriophyllum spicatum</i>	Eurasian watermilfoil	X		
<i>Onopordum acanthium</i>	Scotch thistle		X	
<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>	Japanese knotweed		X	
<i>Potentilla recta</i>	Sulfur cinquefoil			X
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Tall buttercup		X	
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Tansy ragwort		X	
<i>Tamarix spp.</i>	Tamarisk, Saltcedar	X		
<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>	Common tansy			X
<i>Verbascum spp.</i>	Mullein			X
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander speedwell			X
<i>Veronica officinalis</i>	Common speedwell			X

The list of noxious weeds in the table above includes the state of Montana and Lincoln and Sanders County lists as well as other weed species that the Forest considers important. The state of Montana and Lincoln County are very concerned about new invaders, especially three relatively new weed invaders: tansy ragwort, rush skeleton weed, and orange hawkweed. There is a strong desire to keep these species from moving east of the Continental Divide into the large farming areas of central and eastern Montana. The state has provided added monies for surveys and spraying to contain the expansion of these species and to eradicate them. Even though strong

emphasis is placed on these species, concern also remains for all the other weed species listed. Control is not confined to the three species above. Treatments for all weed species are an Integrated Pest Management approach that includes one, or a combination of the following:

- Biological – release of bio-agents;
- Mechanical – hand pulling, hoeing, clipping of seed heads, etc.;
- Chemical – application of herbicides; and
- Cultural – establishment of desirable plants as competition.

The 2007 Weeds FEIS and ROD places the emphasis on an integrated aerial and ground weed control operation. Existing weed infestations have expanded greatly in numbers, aerial extent, and diversity over the past 25 years. The most common weed on the KNF is spotted knapweed. In 1995, county weed specialists estimated that knapweed infested over 240,000 acres in Lincoln County and 175,000 acres in Sanders County (Hirsch and Leitch 1996). The current estimate is over 300,000 acres in Lincoln County (USDA Forest Service 2007b Weeds FEIS). Two-thirds of the total infestations are in forestlands and rangelands with the remaining third in road or railway corridors. Weed risk on the KNF, as documented in the 2007 Weeds FEIS, estimates that with current levels of disturbance, 63 percent of the Forest (1,400,800 acres) is at high risk, with 27 percent (603,800 acres) at moderate risk.

Additional information that was developed from the weed risk assessment that is mentioned above is displayed in table 23.

The weed risk assessment ratings in the table are a composite of 20 noxious weed species. The risk rating was based on individual components including disturbance, weed susceptibility, threat of weeds to native plant communities, and exposure. Methodology used in the assessment is documented in project file records.

**Table 23. Acres by Weed Risk Rating for NFS Lands on the KNF**

Biophysical Group/ Forestwide	Weed Risk Rating	Acres	Percent of Biophysical Group/ Forestwide
Warm/Dry	High	410,900	83
Warm/Dry	Moderate	81,700	17
<b>Warm/Dry Total</b>		<b>492,700</b>	
Warm/Moist	High	573,000	70
Warm/Moist	Moderate	245,600	30
<b>Warm/Moist Total</b>		<b>818,600</b>	
Subalpine	High	416,900	46
Subalpine	Moderate	276,400	31
Subalpine	Low	212,100	23
<b>Subalpine Total</b>		<b>905,400</b>	
Water	None	2,200	
<b>Water Total</b>		<b>2,200</b>	
Forestwide	High	1,400,800	63
Forestwide	Moderate	603,800	27
Forestwide	Low	212,100	10
Forestwide	None	2,200	0
<b>Forest Total</b>		<b>2,218,900</b>	

## Environmental Consequences

### *Management Direction for Alternative A*

The 1987 Forest Plan contains very little management direction related to the management of non-native invasive plants. However, there is one forestwide goal (#23, p II-2) for noxious weeds and it expresses the desire to stop the spread of weeds and to suppress the existing weed levels.

### *Management Direction for Alternatives B Modified, C, and D*

Relative to Alternative A, all of these action alternatives contain more management direction related to non-native invasive plants. For example, these alternatives contain forestwide desired condition statements (FW-DC-VEG-10) and objectives (FW-OBJ-VEG-02) that stress the need to treat new invaders and utilize BMPs that limit the introduction and spread from management activities. The integrated pest management approaches and BMPs that are being used in the region are described in FSM 2081. In addition to the forestwide direction noted above, these alternatives also contain additional direction for some specific MAs. All of the action alternatives contain numerous Forest Plan components (e.g., FW-DC-WTR-01; FW-DC-SOIL-01,02,03; FW-DC-RIP-04, 06; FW-DC-AQH-01; FW-OBJ-SOIL-01; FW-STD-RIP-03, 04; FW-DGL-RIP-03, 05; FW-GDL-ASQ-02) that would serve to protect watershed, soil, riparian, and aquatic conditions in ways that would reduce management caused disturbances in these areas that could otherwise increase weed spread or introduction.

### *Consequences to Non-native Invasive Plants from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Access and Recreation Management**

Vehicles can carry noxious weeds when they pass through infestations or along the periphery of invasions where seeds or other plant parts occur (Sheley et al. 1999). Roadsides along major highways, general forest roads, and two-tracked roads are one of the primary mechanisms for the spread of these plants. Motorized, as well as non-motorized, recreation activities are also a common means for the spread of weeds. Recreational areas and facilities, such as trails, trailheads, and campgrounds receive a high amount of public use and soil disturbance; and this facilitates weed introduction and spread. Recreationists can disperse seeds on their clothing, footwear, camping equipment, and vehicles (Sheley et al. 1999). Lastly, users of horse and pack stock may transport weed seeds in the supplemental feed that they use to feed their animals.

There are numerous weed prevention and control measures required by Forest Service policy (FSM 2081) for the management of roads and recreational activities. However, despite the use of those best measures, there is still a risk that new weeds could be introduced or existing weeds spread as a result of these types of activities. To the extent that the alternatives would affect the access and recreational activities or opportunities noted above, there would be consequences to the risk of weed introduction and spread. As discussed in more detail in the “Access and Recreation” topic, the management direction associated with the alternatives would not vary with regards to potential effects on motorized and non-motorized access and recreational opportunities on the KNF. Therefore, the risk that weeds would be introduced and/or spread as a result of these activities is similar for all the alternatives.

#### **Effects from Vegetation and Timber Management**

Activities associated with timber harvest and mechanical fuels treatments; such as construction and use of roads, landings, and skid trails, disturb the soil and can create a more susceptible environment for the spread of weeds. Noxious weeds can also be introduced into an area by mechanical equipment associated with these activities. In addition, the use of prescribed fire associated with the management of vegetation can increase the likelihood for weed spread.

While there are numerous weed prevention and control measures required by Forest Service policy (FSM 2081) related to timber harvesting and other vegetation treatment activities, there is still a risk that these activities would result in spreading or introducing new weed species. As presented in the discussions for the “Vegetation” and “Timber” topics, the alternatives vary in the estimated amount of vegetation and timber treatments that would occur given the different management direction for each alternative; and under the two different budget scenarios. For the purpose of a general comparison between alternatives on how vegetation and timber related direction may affect the risk of weed introduction and spread, the number of acres of treatment can be used as an indicator.

Under the assumption that budget levels in the future will remain similar to current levels, Alternative A is predicted to result in the smallest number of acres being treated with timber harvest activities or prescribed fire (approximately 2.4 percent of the forested acres during the first decade), while Alternatives B Modified and C would result in the largest number of acres (each is approximately 7.1 percent) being treated during that time period. Alternative D is predicted to treat approximately 6.7 percent. If the budget constraint was removed, most of the alternatives would treat more acres. Compared to the other alternatives, Alternative A would treat

the smallest number of acres (approximately 2.5 percent), followed by Alternative D (6.4 percent), Alternative C (7.2 percent) and lastly, Alternative B Modified (7.3 percent).

#### **Effects from Fire Management**

Non-native invasive plants frequently invade sites following fires and sometimes it can occur on a large scale (Asher et al. 2000). In addition, wildfire suppression efforts often involve constructing control lines and requiring staging areas for fire equipment and fire camps. Control lines are usually dug down to bare mineral soil and can provide sites that are very vulnerable to weed establishment and spread. While there are many weed prevention and control measures that are required by Forest Service policy (FSM 2081) that are associated with the management of wildfires and prescribe fires; there is an increased risk of weed invasions and introductions in burned areas.

The relative risk among alternatives for prescribed fire was addressed above in the “Vegetation” and “Timber” paragraph. Therefore, the following discussion concerns risks associated from natural, unplanned ignitions that are managed to meet resource objectives. As described in more detail in the discussion of the “Fire” topic, the management direction associated with Alternatives B Modified, C, and D would result in an increased level of natural, unplanned ignitions being used to meet resource objectives compared to Alternative A. While it is difficult to predict the magnitude of the likely consequences, Alternatives B Modified, C, and D would result in higher risks for weed introduction and spread compared to Alternative A due to the increased amount of natural, unplanned ignitions being used to meet resource objectives that is anticipated for the action alternatives.

#### **Effects from Wildlife Management**

As previously noted, wildlife species are one of the many mechanisms that serve to spread non-native invasive plants. Weed seeds, or parts of plants, can attach to the fur or feet of wildlife, or in some cases, are eaten and pass through animals, and may be ready to germinate (Sheley et al. 1999). Therefore, to the degree that the various alternatives may affect wildlife populations, there could be some effects on the amount of weed spread that occurs. In addition, when conducting wildlife habitat restoration and improvement projects (for example prescribed burning to improve big game forage) one of the consequences may be that the site conditions are created that are more suitable for weed establishment and/or spread. However, the consequences of the wildlife-related management direction on the establishment and spread of non-native invasive plants is likely to be similar for all of the alternatives.

#### **Effects from Watershed, Soil, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat Management**

Noxious weed infestations are fairly common in some riparian areas on the KNF. This is due to the availability of ample moisture, the high potential for weed seed transportation through stream systems, and in some instances, the high levels of public activity due to recreational activities in these areas. Some weed species are adapted to riparian areas.

While all the alternatives include the INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995) direction that would serve to reduce weed spread/introductions in these areas, the action alternatives contain more protection measures. In addition, there are a number of soil-and water-related weed prevention and control measures required by Forest Service policy (FSM 2081) that are applicable for all alternatives.



### **Effects from Livestock Grazing Management**

Livestock can transport weed seeds in their fur, wool, or manure (Sheley et al. 1999). In areas where livestock congregate, such as around watering sites, trails, corrals, and along fence lines, the high level of soil disturbance can create conditions for weed germination and spread. In addition, some weed species do not require bare soil to become established and can compete with native plants in riparian areas or other heavily vegetated areas in allotments.

As discussed in more detail in the “Livestock Grazing” section of this final EIS, the amount of livestock grazing on the KNF is not anticipated to vary due to the management direction associated with various alternatives. Therefore, the risk that livestock grazing activities would introduce and/or spread non-native invasive plants would be the same across all alternatives. There are numerous weed prevention and control measures required by Forest Service policy (FSM 2081) related to livestock grazing, and they would be utilized under all alternatives to reduce the weed related risks associated with these activities.

### **Effects from Minerals, Lands, and Special Uses Management**

Activities associated with locating and removing minerals and the issuance of special use permits or the acquisition, disposal, or exchange of lands can have consequences to the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. However, the Forest Plan components relating to those activities do not vary by alternative; therefore, the weed risks would be similar with each alternative. There are numerous weed prevention and control measures required by Forest Service policy (FSM 2081) related to lands, special uses, and minerals; and they would be utilized under all alternatives to reduce the weed related risks associated with these activities.

### **Cumulative Effects**

The effects that past activities have had on the introduction and spread of non-native invasive plants were discussed in the “Affected Environment” section and are reflected in the current condition. Therefore, past activities are not carried forward into the following cumulative effects discussion. Present and foreseeable future activities that could have consequences are summarized below.

**Human Population Increases and Additional Recreational Use of the KNF:** The regional population is expected to increase in the area surrounding the KNF. As the human population increases in the region, it is expected that there will be more recreational use of the KNF. It is anticipated that all types of recreational use will increase, but because of the aging demographics, there may be a slight increase in the motorized use versus more strenuous non-motorized activities. In general, both of these trends may increase the spread of weeds and/or the probability of new weed species being introduced. This effect would cumulatively add to those resulting from the alternatives.

**Climate Change:** As discussed in more detail in the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b), climate change may increase the risk in the Northern Region of the spread of non-native invasive plant species, but there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding any predictions. It is likely that some noxious weeds will likely expand as the climate changes and some may decline. However, if climate change results in more wildfire activity as predicted, more area is likely to burn and the result would be an increase in highly suitable areas for weeds to spread to in the future. As a result, climate change may directly, or indirectly, cumulatively add to the risks resulting from the alternatives.

## *Fire and Fuels Management*

### **Introduction**

Fire is an ecological process as well as a disturbance. In some ways, fire is similar to insects, diseases, wind events, floods, or ice storms. However, unlike other processes and disturbances, fire can also be used as a tool to manage natural resources. Land managers can plan for fire use to achieve management objectives; whether through the use of prescribed fire (i.e., a planned ignition) or natural, unplanned ignitions (i.e., ignited by lightning as opposed to humans).

Fire management programs oversee all aspects of fire suppression as well as the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet management objectives. Fire suppression actions include a full range of options, from resource intensive (e.g., large numbers of personnel and equipment) to less intensive activities. The decision to use one or a combination of suppression strategies and tactics depends on management objectives and factors including such things as threats to life, property, and investments; fuel and weather conditions; natural resource objectives; terrain; and available resources such as personnel and equipment.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (16 U.S.C. 551):** Authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to make provisions for the protection of the national forests against destruction by fire.
- **Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of July 22, 1937 (7 U.S.C. 1010, 1011):** Authorizes and directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a program of land conservation and land utilization to protect public lands.
- **Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131, 1132):** Authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to take such measures as may be necessary in the control of fire with designated wilderness.
- **National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of October 22, 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.):** Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to specify guidelines for land management plans to ensure protection of forest resources. Implementing regulations at Title 36, Part 219 of the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 219.27) specify that consistent with the relative resource values involved, management prescriptions in forest plans must minimize serious or long-lasting hazards from wildfire.
- **Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.):** Provides for the protection and enhancement of the nation's resources and applies to the application and management of prescribed fire.
- **Economy Act of 1932, June 30, 1932 (41 U.S.C. 686):** Provides for procurement of materials, supplies, equipment, work, or services from other federal agencies.
- **Granger-Thye Act of April 24, 1950 (16 U.S.C. 572):** Authorizes expenditure of Forest Service funds to erect buildings, lookout towers, and other structures on land owned by states. It provides for the procurement and operation of aerial facilities and services for the protection and management of the national forests and other lands administered by the Forest Service.

- **Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955 (42 U.S.C. 1856, Chapter 15A):** Authorizes reciprocal agreements with federal, state, and other wildland fire protection organizations.
- **Wildfire Suppression Assistance Act of April 7, 1989 (HR 4936):** Authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to enter into agreements with fire organizations of foreign countries for assistance in wildfire protection.
- **Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HR 1904):** Expedites the preparation and implementation of hazardous fuels projects on federal land and assisting rural communities, states, and landowners in restoring healthy forest conditions on state and private lands.

#### *Regulation and Policy*

- **The National Fire Plan:** Directs reduction of hazardous fuel and restoration of forest and rangeland. Includes a ten-year Comprehensive Strategy (2001) and implementation plan response developed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, Western Governors, and other interested parties for protecting communities and the environment. Coupled with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (Interagency Federal Wildland Fire Policy Review Working Group 2001), the Plan forms a framework for federal agencies, states, tribes, local governments, and communities to reduce the threat of fire, to improve the condition of the land, to restore forest and rangeland health, and to reduce risk to communities.
- **The Healthy Forests Initiative:** Reduces administrative process to facilitate implementation of projects to reduce hazardous fuels and restore healthy ecological conditions on federal lands. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act, passed in December 2003, provides improved statutory processes for hazardous fuel reduction projects on certain types of at-risk NFS and BLM lands. It also provides other authorities and direction to help reduce hazardous fuel and restore healthy forest and rangeland conditions on lands of all ownerships. Healthy Forest Restoration Act is intended to be consistent with, and supportive of, the community-based wildfire planning, watershed planning, and related ongoing efforts under the National Fire Plan and Comprehensive Strategy.

#### **Key Indicators**

- How much, where, and under what conditions may planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions be used to meet resource objectives on the Forest; and
- How much fuel treatment the alternatives would likely implement and the relative risk reduction that could occur.

#### **Methodology and Analysis Process**

The analysis area for fire is all lands on and within the KNF. This area represents NFS lands where fire management activities may take place. Cumulative effects includes other land ownerships within and adjacent to lands administered by the KNF, particularly in areas of wildland-urban interface. This larger area incorporates concerns to and from other landowners with regard to the potential effects on or from these intermingled properties. This approach is consistent with the coordination that occurs between states, counties, other federal agencies, and private landowners under the National Fire Plan and other fire management direction.

### Affected Environment — Use of Fire for the Maintenance and Restoration of Fire-Adapted Ecosystems

The affected environment for the “Vegetation” section provides a comprehensive discussion on the historical and current role that fire has had on the KNF, the types of wildfires that historically occurred on the KNF and the ecological and environmental effects from fire suppression. That part of the “Vegetation” section provides a better appreciation for the importance that fire has on the maintenance of the biodiversity and productivity of ecosystems on the KNF, and provides the overall context for understanding the environmental consequences of the alternatives presented in the “Environmental Consequences” section for this topic.

The AMS Technical Report (USDA Forest Service 2003 March) describes the number of wildfires that have occurred on the KNF during the last 100 years. Historically, fire has played a significant role in ecosystem processes for vegetation on the Forest. Historical fire levels for the Forest were probably similar to the levels that occurred in the Interior Columbia Basin, which was 3 percent of the area in an “average” fire year and up to 6 percent of the area in an “active” fire year (Barrett et al. 1997). Based on wildfire and prescribed fire records for the last 10 years, the KNF has averaged approximately 5 percent of its area. The KNF has used prescribed burning as a tool to treat fuels, improve habitat, and reduce wildland fire risk for the past several decades. During the last 10 years, the KNF has used prescribed burning on approximately 80,000 acres. Over the last 3 year period (2008 to 2010), the number of wildfires per year that occurred on the KNF ranged from 76 to 176 and the number of acres that burned annually from those fires varied from 88 to 2,600 acres (this included one fire that was 2,400 acres in size).

Fire use as a tool can have adverse effects under certain conditions, even though it is an important ecosystem process. Current Forest Plan direction is intended to help define those situations where fire use will be limited or not be considered appropriate due to potential adverse resource or social-economic impacts. Part of the decision criteria to determine whether a natural, unplanned ignition will be managed to meet resource objectives is whether or not the fire would likely benefit or harm resources and be consistent with the Forest Plan direction.

Prescribed fire or natural, unplanned ignitions can help achieve certain management objectives. The use of either tool will occur within certain conditions or prescriptions. Prescribed fire and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives are likely to be implemented at different times during the burning season, and therefore, have somewhat different effects. Prescribed fires are often conducted in the spring and fall within burning “windows” that are developed to ensure that the effects meet resource management objectives. Conversely, lightning produces the natural, unplanned fires that may be managed to meet resource objectives. Most of the lightning storms that ignite wildfires occur in July and August on the KNF. Therefore, the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives may more often be implemented under drier conditions than those that would occur within prescribed fire burning windows. Prescribed fires implemented in the spring or fall would more likely be of lower intensities and severities than natural, unplanned ignitions that are managed to meet resource objectives during the summer. In addition, the potential size of the natural, unplanned fire being managed to meet resource objectives is likely greater than most fires ignited by planned ignitions.

## Environmental Consequences — Use of Fire for the Maintenance and Restoration of Fire-Adapted Ecosystems

### *Management Direction for Alternative A*

The 1987 Forest Plan for the KNF contains some direction regarding the role that fire should have on affecting the ecosystems. Forestwide goal #17 (p. II-2) states: “Use prescribed fire to simulate natural ecological processes, prevent excessive natural and activity fuel buildups, create habitat diversity for wildlife, reduce suppression costs, and maintain ecosystems.” In addition, a forestwide desired condition states: “Where lands are to resemble a near-natural condition fire will be allowed to operate with minimal constraint as an agent of ecological adjustment and maintenance” (vol. 1, p. II-19). However, as opposed to the action alternatives, Alternative A does not have any specific forestwide direction that provides an emphasis on the need to use fire as a tool to restore and/or maintain ecosystem composition, structure, or function. Most of the direction in the 1987 Forest Plan regarding fire is contained within the individual MA standards and guidelines.

There are 22 individual MAs that are contained in the 1987 Forest Plan that contain direction regarding the use of prescribed fire, the use of natural, unplanned ignitions, and appropriate suppression strategies and tactics in both critical and non-critical fire seasons.

Prescribed fire (planned ignitions) may be used in all MAs except MA7 (Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area). However, the use of natural, unplanned ignitions is fairly restrictive in the 1987 Forest Plan and some of the MA standards in the Plan serve as barriers for the use of this tool. For example, twelve MAs (5, 6, 13, 15-21, 23, and 24) have standards that do not allow the use of natural, unplanned ignitions and the acres that these MAs occupy is substantial; approximately 25 percent of the total acres on the KNF.

Six MAs (2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 29) allow the use of natural, unplanned ignitions with some exceptions. These six MAs occupy approximately 24 percent of the total acres on the Forest. For these MAs, natural, unplanned ignitions can only be used to meet resource objectives if the fire is predicted to stay within one of these MAs or adjacent ones that also have been approved for the use of natural, unplanned ignitions. Also, natural, unplanned ignitions in these MAs may only be managed to meet resource objectives if the fire effects are such that “...the fire must not adversely affect the goals or standards of this or any other MA.”

The remaining four MAs (10, 11, 12, and 14) that contain direction on the use of natural, unplanned ignitions allow its use only if the fire occurs during the non-critical fire season AND meets the other stipulations that were discussed above. This last group of four MAs comprises approximately 45 percent of the total acreage on the KNF.

The AMS identified several impediments to the use of fire in the 1987 Forest Plan. The MAs were numerous and generally small in size. Adjoining MAs often had different or unclear direction on the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives; this resulted in creating a difficult situation for developing subsequent fire management plans and implementing an integrated fire management program. Also, because the 1987 Forest Plan did not contain an emphasis or much analysis on the use of fire (especially natural, unplanned ignitions), it was generally believed that the Plan did not adequately authorize the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives.

### *Management Direction for Alternatives B Modified, C, and D*

Alternatives B Modified, C, and D contain more specific forestwide and MA direction regarding the role that fire would have maintaining and/or restoring fire-adapted ecosystems. For example, each action alternative would contain forestwide desired condition FW-DC-FIRE-03 from the Plan; which states, “The use of wildland fire (both prescribed fire and, where appropriate, natural, unplanned ignitions) increases in many areas across the Forest. Fire plays an increased role in helping to trend the vegetation towards the desired conditions while serving other important ecosystem functions.” In addition, each of the alternatives would contain two forestwide objectives (FW-OBJ-FIRE-01 and 02), which indicate that fire would be used as a tool for both fuel reduction and ecosystem maintenance/restoration functions. The second of these objectives expresses the desire that at least 10 percent of the natural, unplanned ignitions would be managed to improve and/or maintain fire adapted ecosystems. Other forestwide direction (FW-DC-WL-15, FW-OBJ-VEG-01, and FW-GDL-VEG-01) that relates to vegetation or wildlife habitat would allocate fire to play a greater role as a management tool. At the scale of the individual MAs, all the action alternatives would contain desired conditions and guidelines from the Plan that would articulate what role fire should have and whether or not one or both of the principle fire tools (prescribed fire or the use of natural, unplanned ignitions) may be used. In general, many of the MAs express the desire to increase the use of fire as a tool (natural or prescribed) to trend the ecosystems toward the desired conditions. Some of the MAs, typically the ones that occupy small areas and contain resources and/or values that are more susceptible to being harmed by fire, contain limits or restrictions on the use of fire, especially natural, unplanned ignitions. These are research natural areas (MA4), primary recreation areas (MA7), and some historical or botanical special areas (MA3).

In summary, the management direction that is contained in all of the action alternatives is generally designed to encourage an increased use of fire (whether it be prescribed fire or natural, unplanned ignitions) as a tool to assist in the restoration and maintenance of the various ecosystems on the KNF. However, management direction also recognizes that in certain situations and locations natural, unplanned ignitions are undesirable because the risk of harming values is too great; and therefore, suppression action can be taken.

### *General Effects*

The general effects that fire has on vegetation and forest ecosystems are presented in the “Affected Environment” section for vegetation. In addition, the effects of not using fire or suppressing wildfires are also discussed in that section.

Relative to Alternative A, Alternatives B Modified, C, and D would provide more opportunity and direction for the use of fire for the purposes of restoring or maintaining the fire-adapted ecosystems on the KNF. The management direction associated with the action alternatives supports a substantial increase in the use of fire; both the use of prescribed fire as well as the use of natural, unplanned ignitions.

With regard to the action alternatives, the Forest Plan components that provide direction or otherwise influence the use of fire are similar. However, there are subtle differences in the mix of fire “tools” that are likely to be used under the various action alternatives. Relative to the other action alternatives, Alternative D has a greater emphasis on the production of timber and the use of other active management techniques to trend the vegetation towards desired conditions. Therefore, the use of fire under Alternative D would likely result in a greater amount of prescribed fire (e.g., underburning and/or pile burning) used as opposed to natural, unplanned ignitions. In contrast, Alternative C would have the greatest emphasis on passive management;

therefore, would likely use natural, unplanned ignitions as the primary tool to trend towards desired vegetation conditions, relative to prescribed fire. Finally, the mix of fire tools that would more likely be used for Alternative B Modified would fall between that of Alternatives C and D. Most of the MAs (and the vast majority of the total acres on the KNF) allow the use of natural, unplanned ignitions as a restoration and maintenance tool. The special area MAs (MA3), the research natural areas (MA4), and the primary recreation areas (MA7) generally do not allow the use of unplanned ignitions. For those areas, the risk that a wildfire would harm the values associated with those areas was considered too high.

### Affected Environment — Wildland-Urban Interface

The wildland-urban interface (WUI) is the line, area, or zone where structures and other human developments meet or intermingle with wildland or vegetative fuels. Population growth has led to an increase in these interface areas. More and more people are living in small communities adjacent to the WUI. Throughout the West the number of communities threatened or affected by wildfire has increased. To address this concern, as well as concerns about the effects of wildfires on natural resources, the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior were directed to develop a strategy to address severe wildland fires, reduce fire impacts on rural communities, and ensure effective firefighting capability in the future. This strategy, which includes national strategic and implementation goals and plans, budget requests and appropriations, and agency action plans, is known as the National Fire Plan.

The presence of the WUI areas affects all fire management decisions in those interface areas. While a wide range of fire management strategies are available to implement, these options are usually narrowed down in these zones due to concerns that fires may move from federal to private lands. Therefore, suppression costs are often higher adjacent to interface areas. In addition to the risk of wildfires moving from federal lands onto private lands, the risk of human-caused wildfires originating on private lands and spreading onto federally protected lands is increasing.

Currently, approximately 30 percent of the lands on the KNF are within this WUI area<sup>1</sup> and the KNF has been collaborating with other landowners and jurisdictions to reduce the risk of wildfires in these areas. Individual community protection plans have been created by the counties and the KNF has been working cooperatively to reduce the fuels and jointly make progress towards reducing risks.

### Environmental Consequences — Wildland-Urban Interface

#### *Management Direction for Alternative A*

The 1987 Forest Plan does not contain specific Forest Plan components or other direction related to the need to address the fuel and fire hazards associated with the WUI area. However, since the Forest Plan was developed, a number of national policies, initiatives, and acts have emphasized the need to address this issue. As described in more detail in the “Cumulative Effects” discussion, national direction has had a large influence over fire management programs on the KNF and in the way the 1987 Forest Plan has been implemented. For about a decade the KNF has focused its fuel reduction programs around the WUI and has collaborated with various counties in implementing their respective fire mitigation plans and programs. Therefore, although the 1987 Forest Plan does not contain direction on this, implementation of the 1987

<sup>1</sup> There are different definitions for the WUI area. This estimate was based on the areas that were identified in the various community protection plans as being in the WUI.

Plan is heavily influenced by national and local emphasis on the need to reduce fuel hazards in these areas.

#### *Management Direction for Alternatives B Modified, C, and D*

All action alternatives would contain similar direction regarding WUI and hazardous fuel reduction. Forestwide desired conditions (FW-DC-FIRE-01, 02, 03) express the need to reduce hazardous fuels within the WUI as well as other areas where values are at risk; while recognizing that the public and firefighter safety is always a priority with all fire management activities. Specifically, FW-DC-FIRE-02 states:

“Hazardous fuels are reduced within the WUI and other areas where values are at risk. Fire behavior characteristics and fuel conditions exist in these areas that allow for safe and effective fire management, as defined and characterized in county wildland fire mitigation plans. Fire behavior is characterized by low-intensity surface fire with limited crownfire potential. Forest conditions, and the pattern of conditions across the landscape, exist in these areas such that the risk is low for epidemic levels of bark beetles, high levels of root disease, and large scale, stand replacement fires.”

In addition, these alternatives would contain forestwide direction regarding the objective of treating fuels (FW-OBJ-FIRE-01) with the highest priority for treatment in the WUI.

#### *General Effects*

As described above, relative to the 1987 Forest Plan, the action alternatives would contain more direction and emphasis on the need to treat fuels and lower wildfire risks in the WUI areas. For each of the action alternatives, the forestwide objective (FW-OBJ-FIRE-01) would be to treat fuels on NFS lands over approximately 5,000 to 15,000 acres annually and do so with an emphasis on placing those activities in WUI areas. As a result of those activities, the hazardous fuels in those WUI areas would likely be reduced. In addition, treatments on NFS lands in the WUI often adjoin other land owners/jurisdictions where additional fuel treatments are occurring. The result is a larger area where hazards would be mitigated.

#### *Consequences to Fire from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

##### **Effects from Social and Economic Management**

As opposed to Alternative A, the action alternatives all contain a forestwide desired condition (FW-DC-SES-04) component that states: “To the extent possible, the Forest contributes to the protection of communities and individuals from wildfire within the limits of firefighter safety and budgets.” This desired condition provides additional emphasis (in addition to fire components previously discussed for the action alternatives) on the need for the KNF to help protect communities. As a result, the action alternatives are more responsive to the issue of fire risk in the WUI and the need to reduce hazardous fuels as one of the measures to help protect communities.

##### **Effects from Air Quality Management**

The consequences to fire (both the use of fire for the maintenance/restoration of ecosystems, as well as using fire to reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI) from air quality related Forest Plan components are the same for all alternatives and would be similar to those presented for the



vegetation topic. All action alternatives have Plan components (i.e., FW-DC-AQ-01, FW-GDL-AQ-01) that indicate that air quality standards established by federal and state agencies would be met and that the Forest Service would meet the requirements of state implementation plans and smoke management plans. Through experience implementing these components under the 1987 Forest Plan, it is apparent that the ability to use prescribed fire to manage forest vegetation is impacted. Often, obtaining the required smoke permissions to burn essentially serves to constrain how much can be burned and when and where it can occur. The costs of conducting prescribed fires increases as a result of the burning regulations, and to some degree, this affects how many acres would be burned. Because the use of fire is so important for the maintenance/restoration of the fire-adapted ecosystems on the KNF, as well as a tool for hazardous fuel reduction activities, the consequences of this would be substantial.

#### **Effects from Access and Recreation Management**

The consequences to fire from access and recreation Forest Plan components are predicted to be fairly minor and are likely to be similar in nature for all alternatives. As discussed in the “Vegetation” topic, in some circumstances, the use of fire may not be compatible with the scenic integrity objectives of High or Very High that were established along scenic travel routes and other important scenic areas; therefore, those components could have a small effect on the ability to use the fire tool for the maintenance/restoration of ecosystems. The consequences that would result from the no-action alternative as a result of Plan components in the 1987 Forest Plan are fairly similar to the action alternatives.

#### **Effects from Timber Management**

Under Alternative A, the 1987 Forest Plan direction was to suppress wildfires in those MAs where timber production was an objective. The action alternatives do not have this emphasis on protecting timber values. Therefore, there is a greater opportunity to allow natural wildfires to burn and help maintain/restore the fire adapted ecosystems.

#### **Effects from Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Management**

Consequences from watershed, soil, riparian, and aquatic related Forest Plan components on the ability to use fire for ecosystem maintenance/restoration or on the ability to reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI, would generally be similar for all alternatives. All alternatives incorporate the retained decision INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995) and also contain various components to protect soil and aquatic resources. In order to meet the Plan direction associated with soil and aquatic resources there will likely be occasions where prescribed fire, or natural, unplanned ignitions, cannot be used due to potential negative effects that those activities could have on these resources. Road construction, reconstruction, or maintenance activities associated with mechanical fuel treatments may be needed but could be limited if there is potential for sediment delivery to the stream network. Although it is difficult to quantify the effects, protective measures directed towards soil and aquatic resources could limit the use of fire as a vegetation management tool or limit the amount of fuel treatments that could be undertaken in the WUI..

#### **Effects from Wildlife Management**

The ability to use fire as a tool to maintain and/or restore fire-adapted ecosystems is largely discussed in the forest “Vegetation” section. To be consistent with some of the wildlife components (i.e., FW-STD-WL-01, 03) for grizzly bear and lynx, the use of fire would be constrained somewhat in certain areas of the KNF. However, all of the alternatives (including the no-action) would be affected in the same way.

One effect on vegetation from revised Forest Plan components related to wildlife is the desire to maintain or provide old growth or stands with old forest structures for terrestrial species associated with these habitats. To accomplish this, there may be a need to prevent old growth or stands with old forest structures from being lost to stand-replacing wildfires. These stands currently tend to be distributed over most of the landscapes on the KNF and it may be necessary to consider if there would be some level of risk to stands managed for old growth. In minimizing the loss of these types of stands, one effect to vegetation may be that wildfires are suppressed more often, which could reduce the ability to achieve other aspects of the vegetation desired condition (such as increasing early-successional forests and shade-intolerant tree species).

### Cumulative Effects

The effects that past activities have had on the two issues that are addressed above were discussed in the “Affected Environment” sections above and are reflected in the existing condition. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, past activities are not carried forward into the following cumulative effects analysis. Present and foreseeable future activities that could have effects on either the ability to use fire as a tool to maintain/restore fire-adapted ecosystems, or the fire risks in the WUI, are summarized below.

- **National Fire Plan, Healthy Forest Initiative, and Healthy Forest Restoration Act:** Since they were developed, these national level plans, initiatives, and acts (these are called "other plans" for the rest of this discussion) have influenced the vegetation and fuel management programs on the KNF. Therefore, they have had some effects on hazardous fuels and it is anticipated that they will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. In general, these plans have resulted in more vegetation treatments being implemented in the vicinity of WUI areas with the objective of reducing hazardous fuels; and fewer vegetation treatments being conducted in areas located away from communities. In addition, the types of fuel treatments that are being used in response to these other plans are often more expensive and the social issues (i.e., effects of treatments on scenery, air quality, noise, wildlife viewing, etc.) can be more contentious. Therefore, higher public involvement, planning, and implementation expenses are likely to lead to fewer acres being treated within a given budget level. Not only do these other plans emphasize the need to reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI, but they also stress the need to restore the natural fire regimes and forest conditions to the larger national forest lands. These plans encourage the development of more resistant and resilient forest vegetation that would be less susceptible to large undesirable wildfires and/or insect outbreaks.
- **Northern Region Integrated Restoration and Protection Strategy:** The Northern Region of the Forest Service has been working on a strategy and a decision support model to help identify opportunities and priorities for integrated restoration and protection activities throughout the region. This strategy is a component of the larger regional climate change adaptation strategy. In the future, this strategy has the potential to influence program level decisions on the KNF by affecting where, when, and how forest vegetation treatments and protection activities occur. One of the components of this strategy is focused on reducing hazardous fuels in the WUI. Another component emphasizes the need to develop more resistant and resilient forest conditions. It is premature to speculate what the more specific effects may be once this strategy is implemented, but in all likelihood the integrated restoration and protection strategy will result in an emphasis and provide some planning tools towards improving conditions in the WUI and greater forest areas.
- **Status Review of Whitebark Pine:** Recently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completed a status review of whitebark pine for potential listing as a threatened or endangered species.

They concluded that the species warranted listing but was precluded because of the need to address higher priority species. Whitebark pine is now designated as a Candidate species. If it is listed at a later date, there could be effects to the fire management programs on the KNF. In addition to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's review of the species, the regional forester has placed whitebark pine on the sensitive species list for Region One. While it may be too early to determine how these actions may influence the fire programs, one restoration strategy for this tree species may be to conduct more prescribed fire activities; or use more natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives to create conditions for the maintenance and restoration of forest stands that either currently contain or are suitable for whitebark pine.

- **The Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act of 2009:** This act requires the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to submit to Congress a report that contains a "cohesive wildfire management strategy." Therefore, The Wildland Fire Leadership Council directed the development of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy). The Cohesive Strategy utilizes a collaborative "from-the-ground-up" approach built through active involvement of all levels of government and non-governmental organizations, as well as the public, to seek national, all-lands solutions to wildland fire management issues. The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy is an ongoing project that is being planned in three phases. Thus far, only the first phase has been completed and it is too early in the planning process of this national strategy to know with much detail or certainty how the strategy may influence programs and activities that occur on the KNF. However, many of the elements and emphasis items in the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act, as well as the cohesive strategy report, have already been considered and incorporated into the Forest Plan components of the action alternatives and/or the effects analysis. For example, the three key wildfire problem areas that were noted in the strategy report (i.e., Restore and Maintain Landscapes, Fire Adapted Communities, and Response to Fire) are very similar to a number of the Forest Plan revision topics that were identified and used to revise the Forest Plan direction. In addition, a number of the other elements in the Federal Land Assistance, Management, and Enhancement Act (i.e., using a full range of management responses to wildfires, allocating hazardous fuel reduction funds based on priorities, assessing impacts of climate change on wildfires) were considered in the Forest Plan revision process. Because of these reasons, when the national strategy is complete, it is likely that the revised Forest Plan direction (which is contained in all the action alternatives) will be consistent with that national strategy. For this reason, no cumulative effects are anticipated as a result of this national strategy.
- **Climate Change:** Of all of the ongoing and foreseeable future actions that have the potential to affect fire, especially unwanted wildfire, climate change is likely to be the single most important factor. The effects of climate change will likely combine with some of the effects that result from implementing the alternatives, to produce cumulative impacts. The potential effects (and uncertainties) that climate change may have on the fire issues are summarized in the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b). In general, the fire seasons are expected to become longer, large wildfires are expected to occur more often, and total area burned is expected to increase. By increasing the amount of prescribed fire use, as well as the amount of natural, unplanned ignitions used to meet resource objectives, the action alternatives would be expected to partially offset predicted effects from the climate change. The more fire use (and mechanical treatments) that occurs as a result of the action alternatives, the greater the fuels will be reduced and the forest vegetation restored to more resistant and resilient conditions, which would mitigate climate change effects.

- **Human Population Increases and/or Shifts towards Wildland-Urban Interface:** For the last several decades there has been more human development occurring around the "edges" of lands administered by the KNF. This trend is expected to continue in the future and is likely to have effects on the forest vegetation that are similar to those discussed above under the item titled "National Fire Plan, Healthy Forest Initiative, and Healthy Forest Restoration Act." In addition, with a greater number of people living and recreating in these wildland-urban interface areas, there is a greater probability of more human-caused wildfire ignitions that could have effects on the forest vegetation.
- **Increased Regulation and Concern over Smoke Emissions:** The ability to use fire to maintain and/or restore the fire-adapted ecosystems on the KNF, or to use fire to reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI, is highly dependent upon air quality regulations. Therefore, to the extent that air quality regulations may become more stringent in regards to the quantity and timing of smoke emissions, there could be substantial effects on the ability of the KNF fire management program to utilize these fire tools. If past trends of increasing regulations and decreasing burn opportunities continue, the effects could be substantial and would likely result in not being able to use fire enough to make meaningful improvements to forest and fuel conditions and meet objectives.
- **Timber Product Manufacturing Infrastructure and Economics:** The ability of the KNF to positively affect the forest vegetation is partially dependent upon the ability to sell forest products to manufacturing companies; and to use the harvesting process (including the residual slash disposal activities) as a means to positively affect the forest vegetation and reduce hazardous fuels. If the forest products industry declines in areas surrounding the KNF to the degree that it is difficult to sell forest products or "stumpage prices" decrease significantly, it would affect how many acres could be treated and fuels reduced. While some treatments could be accomplished by using prescribed burn only treatments, it is generally too risky in the WUI and very expensive elsewhere.
- **Shared Border with Canada:** The northern portion of the KNF shares an international border with Canada (British Columbia). As such, there may be some impacts regarding the management of wildfires and whether or not the use of natural, unplanned ignitions is appropriate on the KNF when wildfires occur near the USA-Canadian border. The Forest Service, as well as other federal and state agencies in the U.S., has an agreement with Canadian Officials from the province of British Columbia in Canada. The agreement is known as the Northwest Wildland Fire Protection Agreement or the Northwest Compact (Northwest Compact 2013). When a wildfire occurs on the KNF in the vicinity of the border, communications occur between the KNF and the British Columbia fire officials. The decisions associated with how a wildfire is managed in the U.S. near the border can be influenced by the concerns or objectives of the Canadians (and visa-versa). Because of this, the effect could be that some natural, unplanned ignitions that ignite on the KNF that may have otherwise been allowed to burn to meet resource objectives on the KNF could be suppressed or managed differently due to Canadian concerns. The impact on the forest vegetation on the KNF could be a small negative impact in trending the forest vegetation on the KNF towards desired conditions.

## *Watershed, Soils, Riparian, Aquatic Habitat, and Aquatic Species*

### Introduction

The revision topic “Watersheds, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” considers numerous physical and biological resources such as: soil productivity, water quality, native and non-native desirable species, and aquatic habitats.

Legacy effects from past timber harvest, mining, and other human-caused disturbances continue to effect watershed health and the aquatic ecosystem. As amended by INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995a and 1995b), the 1987 Forest Plan direction reduces the risk to watersheds and aquatic biota from new and ongoing activities. For some resources, INFISH standards and guidelines contain general direction for repairing past damage from land management associated with roads, grazing, and recreation activities. Generally, under the direction of the 1987 Forest Plan the intensity and the risks associated with new and ongoing developments and human-induced disturbances has been, and will be, greatly reduced as compared to the last several decades. However, they are likely to continue to accumulate and the press-nature of those disturbances still exists.

There will continue to be localized improvements to watershed, soil, riparian and aquatic habitat conditions as projects are implemented, but wholesale watershed-scale improvements will occur more slowly given current and anticipated funding levels. With the direction and emphasis in the Forest Plan, watershed restoration may tend to be prioritized and directed by more commodity-based resource decisions, such as restoration associated with timber harvest activities and integrated vegetation restoration projects.

Improvements in soil productivity should be reflected through an ongoing reduction in timber harvest and increase in restoration and protection efforts. Additional guidelines provide further direction for soil nutrient management, protection of watershed health improvement in soil quality, and maintenance of soil productivity.

### Legal and Administrative Framework

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Clean Water Act:** The Federal Water Pollution Control Act, or Clean Water Act, is the principal law concerned with polluting activity in the nation's streams, lakes, and estuaries. Originally enacted in 1948, it has been revised by amendments in 1972 (P.L. 92-500) that gave the act its current form and spelled out ambitious programs for water quality improvements that are now being put in place by industries and cities. Congress refined these amendments in 1977 (P.L. 95-217) and 1981 (P.L. 97-117). The 1987 amendments added:
  - A new Section 319 to the act, under which States were required to develop and implement programs to control nonpoint sources of pollution, or rainfall runoff from farm and urban areas, as well as construction, forestry, and mining sites.
  - Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to identify pollutant-impaired water segments and develop "total maximum daily loads" that set the maximum amount of pollution that a water body can receive without violating water quality standards.
  - A water quality classification of streams and lakes to show support of beneficial uses.

- Anti-degradation policies that protect water quality and stream conditions in systems where existing conditions exceed standards.
- **Organic Administration Act:** States that the mission of national forests is to “...provide favorable conditions of water flow...”
- **Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960:** Congress has affirmed the application of sustainability to the broad range of resources over which the USDA Forest Service has responsibility. The Multiple Use Standard Yield Act confirms the USDA Forest Service’s authority to manage the national forests and grasslands, “for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes,” (16 U.S.C. § 528), and does so without limiting the USDA Forest Service’s broad discretion in determining the appropriate resource emphasis or levels of use of the lands of each national forest and grassland.
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (1969):** Requires analysis of projects to insure the anticipated effects upon all resources within the project area are considered prior to project implementation (40CFR1502.16).
- **Endangered Species Act (1973) as amended:** Section 7(a) (1) supports biotic sustainability by requiring that, “All...federal agencies shall ...utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of this act by carrying out programs for the conservation of endangered species and threatened species...” Section 7(a) (2) of ESA includes direction that federal agencies, in consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, will not authorize, fund, or conduct actions that are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat.
- **National Forest Management Act (NFMA) (1976):** Directs the Forest Service to manage for a diversity of habitat to support viable populations (36CFR219.19). Regulations further state that the effects on these species and the reason for their choice as management indicator species need to be documented (36CFR219.19 (a) (1).
- **Executive Order 11988:** Directs federal agencies take action on federal lands to avoid, to the extent possible, the long-and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains. Agencies are required to avoid the direct or indirect support of development on floodplains whenever there are reasonable alternatives and evaluate the potential effects of any proposed action on floodplains.
- **Executive Order 11990, as amended:** Requires federal agencies exercising statutory authority and leadership over federal lands to avoid to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands. Where practicable, direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands must be avoided. Federal agencies are required to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands.
- **Executive Order 12962 (June 7, 1995):** Acknowledges the recreational value of aquatic biota by stating the objectives "to improve the quantity, function, sustainable productivity, and distribution of U.S. aquatic resources for increased recreational fishing opportunities by: “(h) evaluating the effects of federally funded, permitted, or authorized actions on aquatic systems and recreational fisheries and document those effects relative to the purpose of this order”.

### *Regulation and Policy*

- **Forest Service Manual and Handbook Direction (Policy):**
- Forest Service manuals and handbooks within the 2500 file code designation contain direction for soil and watershed management.
- Forest Service manuals and handbooks within the 2600 file code designation contain direction on species and habitat management that supports recovery of listed species and maintenance of viable populations on NFS lands.

### **Key Indicators**

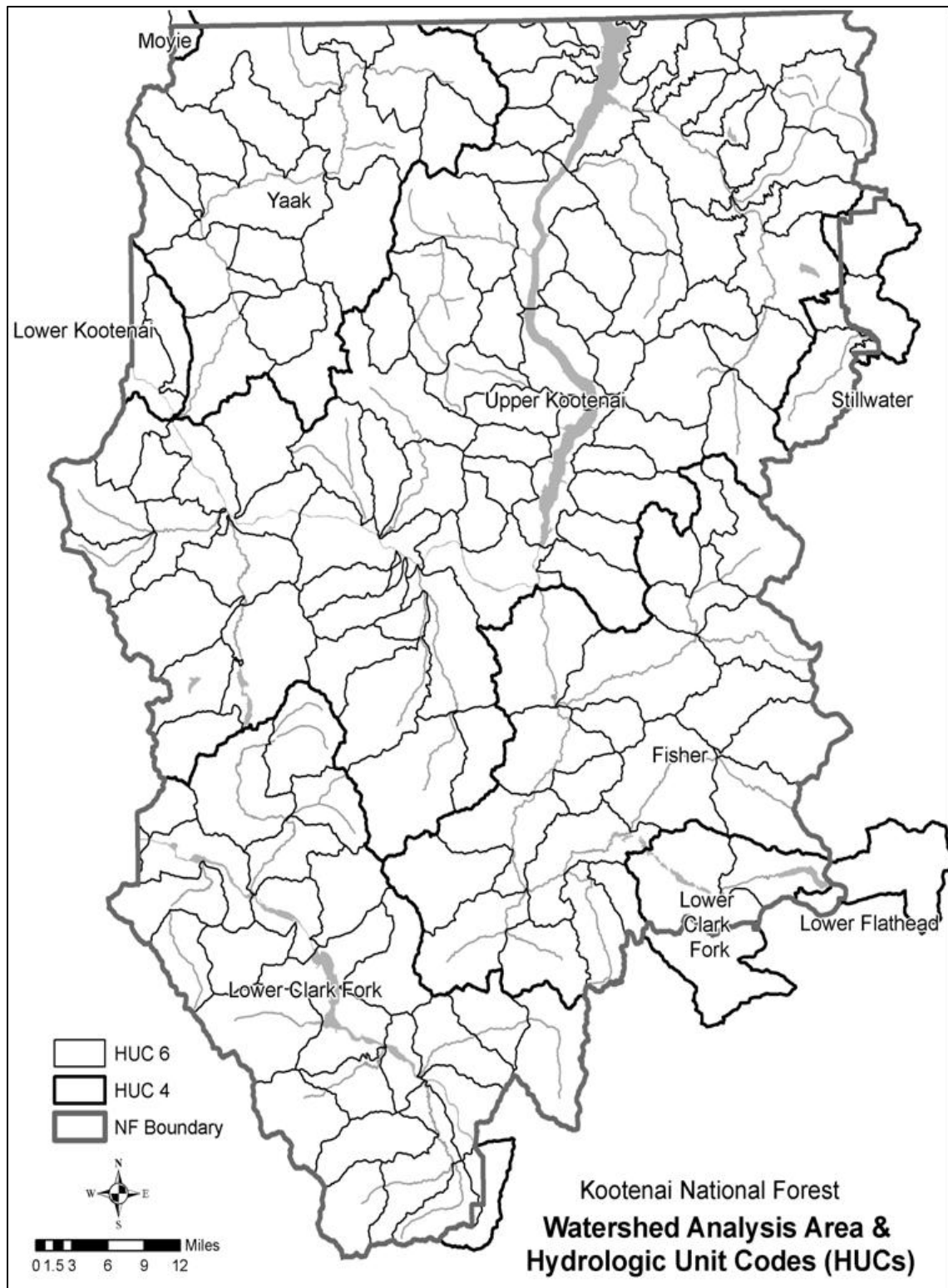
- Trend in watershed condition rating;
- Trend in soil productivity;
- Trend in water quality;
- Trend in riparian ecosystem function; and
- Trend in quality of aquatic habitats.

### **Methodology and Analysis Process**

See appendix D in this EIS.

### **Analysis Area**

The analysis area for the watersheds, soils, and aquatic species in the KNF includes all lands within the outside boundary of the KNF (figure 16). This includes the 2.2 million acres that are under direct NFS lands management, as well as large blocks of corporate timberland and private properties. A significant piece of this contiguous area is under the management of the Plum Creek Timber Company and has been actively managed for resource production in the past. The analysis conducted for this assessment, particularly the existing condition, includes several assumptions relating to activities on the private lands, especially the large blocks of corporate forestry lands.



**Figure 16. The Analysis Area and the Hierarchy of the Watersheds and the Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUCs). A sub-basin is a HUC4, and a subwatershed is a HUC6**



## Changes between Draft and Final

The objective in the revised Forest Plan for the KNF River Invertebrate Prediction and Classification System was adjusted based on comment to achieve a range of scores between 0.80 and 1.20.

## Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

The aquatic systems in the inland northwest evolved over millions of years under the influence of many geologic forces and processes. The present character and resiliency of the systems, climate, and geological processes have evolved following the last ice age, approximately 10,000 years ago. Since then the aquatic systems have been subject to a wide array of disturbances and events. These disturbances have often been intense and cyclic in nature and may appear to recur somewhat randomly, but with predictable frequency. The watersheds and their dependent resources have evolved under this “pulse” disturbance regime so that they can effectively respond to those natural disturbances while sustaining their long-term functions, processes, and condition.

Around the beginning of the 20th century, the influx of human populations began in the inland northwest along with the development of the land and resources to support those populations. This has resulted in many new human-caused disturbances to the watershed systems, and the pattern of many of those disturbances has tended to be a more sustained or “press” disturbance regime. A press disturbance forces an ecosystem to a different domain or set of conditions (Reeves et al. 1995). Many of those disturbances tend to mimic historic “natural” processes, but the frequency and intensity has been greatly amplified. In some cases, the watershed systems have begun to adjust to those press disturbances; or have become altered by them, resulting in an inability to support aquatic dependent resources.

Human activities have altered stream channels by direct modification; such as channelization, mining, removal of large woody debris, dams and diversions, log drives; and building infrastructure such as roads, railways, bridges, and culverts that have encroached on riparian areas and stream channels. Humans have also indirectly affected the incidence, frequency, and magnitude of disturbance events. This has affected inputs and outputs of sediment, water, and vegetation. These factors have combined to cause changes in channel conditions throughout many parts of the Forest resulting in aquatic and riparian habitat conditions measurably different from those that existed prior to human development. Natural (primarily wildfire) and human-caused (timber harvest, fire suppression, road construction, mining, dams, introduction of non-native species, recreation, and grazing) disturbances over the last century have led to changes in the physical watersheds and in the fish and amphibians dependent on them (Lee et al. 1997).

Roads can have some of the greatest effects to watersheds and aquatic biota. Roads can change the runoff characteristics of watersheds, increase erosion and sediment delivery to streams, and alter channel morphology (Furniss et al. 1991). These direct effects lead to changes in habitats for fish and amphibians. Roads also often fragment the habitat of these animals and may be a cause of death for migrating amphibians. Although current BMPs for road construction are designed to minimize the effects to watersheds, many miles of road existing on the landscape were not built to these standards or are no longer maintained. As a result, these roads either continue to affect watersheds through chronic erosion or are at risk for mass failure from crossings or locations on sensitive land types.

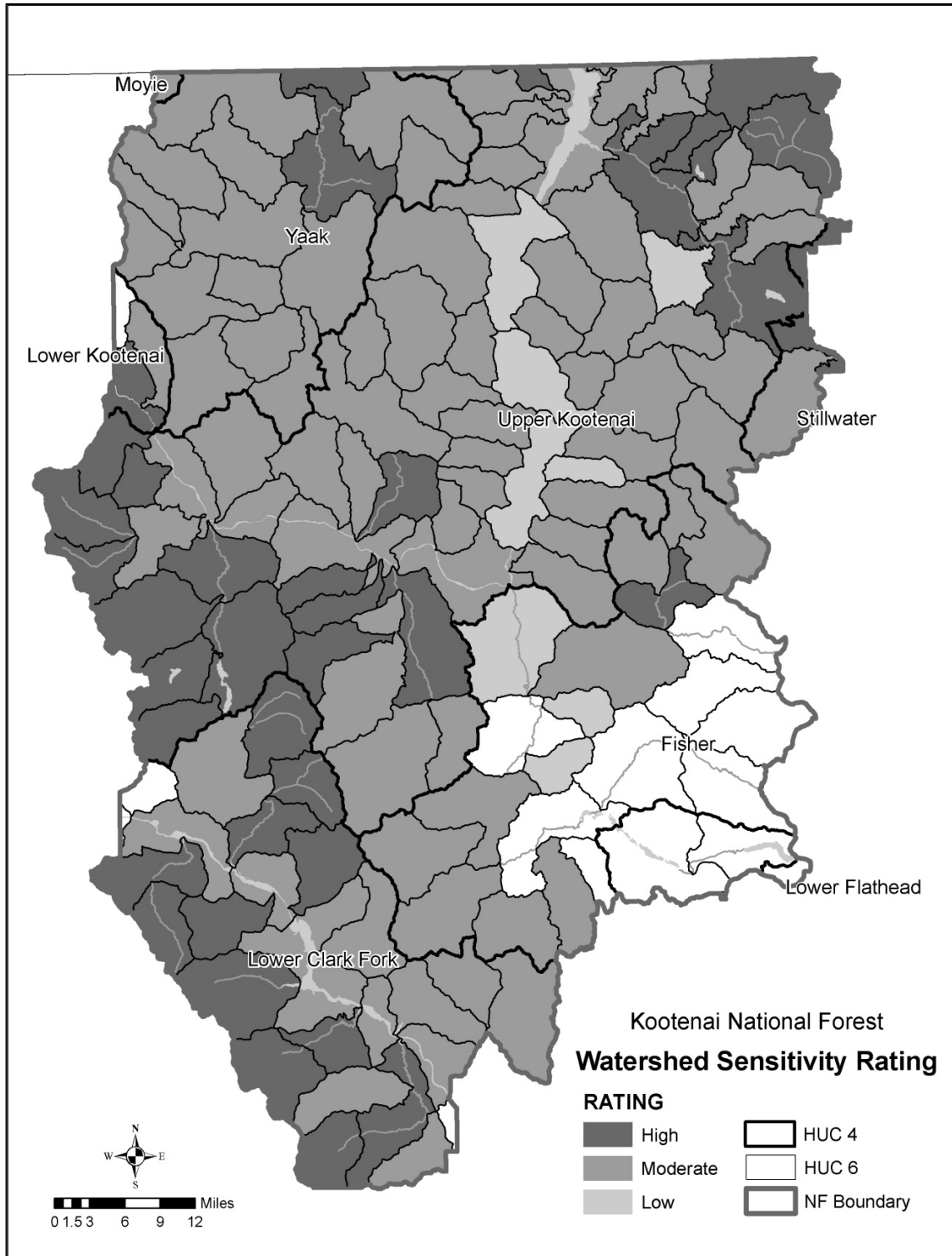
### *Watersheds*

The primary hydrologic unit upon which watershed condition has been assessed is the 6th-level hydrologic unit (subwatershed). To evaluate baseline watershed conditions across the analysis area, a watershed condition rating was determined for each subwatershed. This characterization estimated the existing condition based on physical characteristics (e.g., hydrologic, geomorphic, landscape, topographic, vegetative cover, and aquatic habitat) and human caused disturbances (e.g., road construction and vegetative treatments).

Two primary factors were used in the watershed characterization process: 1) inherent watershed sensitivity and 2) watershed disturbances from land management activities (see appendix D). Table 26 shows the distribution of watershed ratings across the entire Forest.

Watershed Condition Ratings serve to identify landscape function based on inherent watershed sensitivity and riparian and watershed disturbances from current and past land management activities, such as road construction and vegetation treatments. These ratings represent an indicator of overall watershed health at a large scale and provide a reference point to evaluate the past, current, and future trends of soil and aquatic resource conditions. They also contribute to the identification of priority areas for restoration and recovery that may help to reduce the effects of past management activities. These ratings are not independent from other components of the revised Forest Plan, but provide a baseline to understand current and desired conditions for soil and aquatic resources. These ratings are intended to provide a consistent framework to assist specialists and decision makers in evaluating management actions and that those actions will not limit or prevent attainment of desired conditions for soil and aquatic resources.

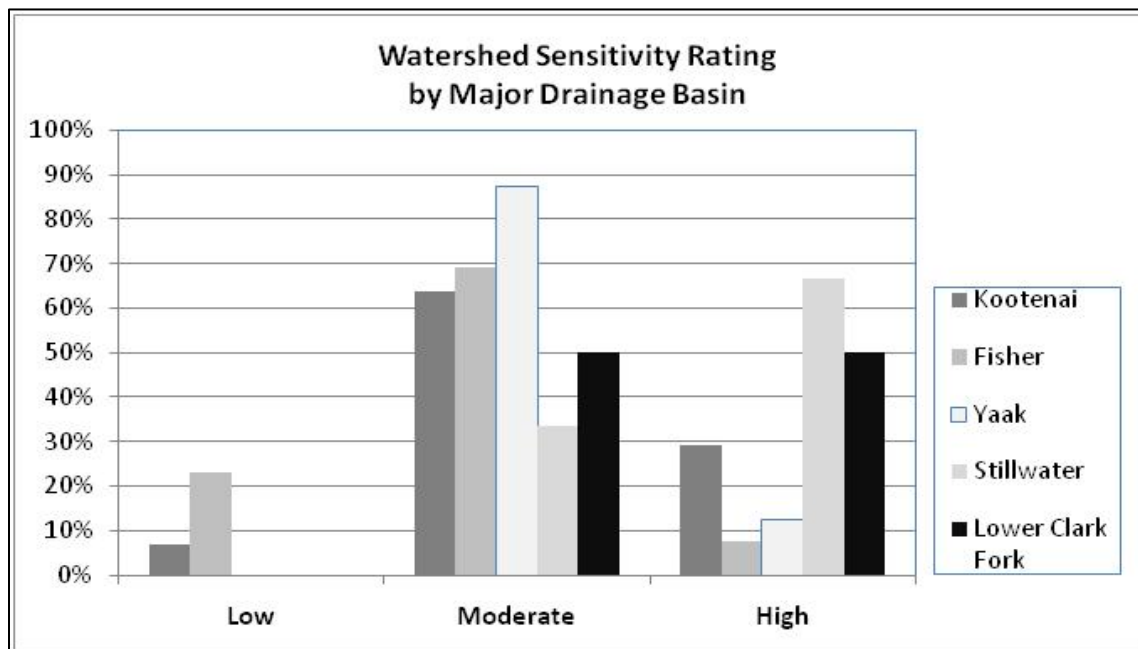
1) Watershed sensitivity provides an indication of drainage's inherent sensitivity with regards to both human and natural disturbances, as well as potential for recovery, following disturbance. To measure inherent sensitivity of each subwatershed, two factors were used; mean annual precipitation and percent of streams that have a gradient of less than 2 percent. These factors were combined to determine an overall Watershed Sensitivity Rating. Subwatersheds across the planning unit appear to have a relatively moderate sensitivity to natural or human caused disturbances (see table 24), when considering climatic and land type variables, with a majority of these subwatersheds located in the Kootenai River drainage, which should be considered in the context of the distribution of subwatersheds on the Forest, as 56 percent are located in that drainage (see figures 17 and 18). Additionally, it appears that there are a relatively high number of drainages in the Stillwater River area rated as "High," although that basin only makes up 2 percent of the entire planning area.



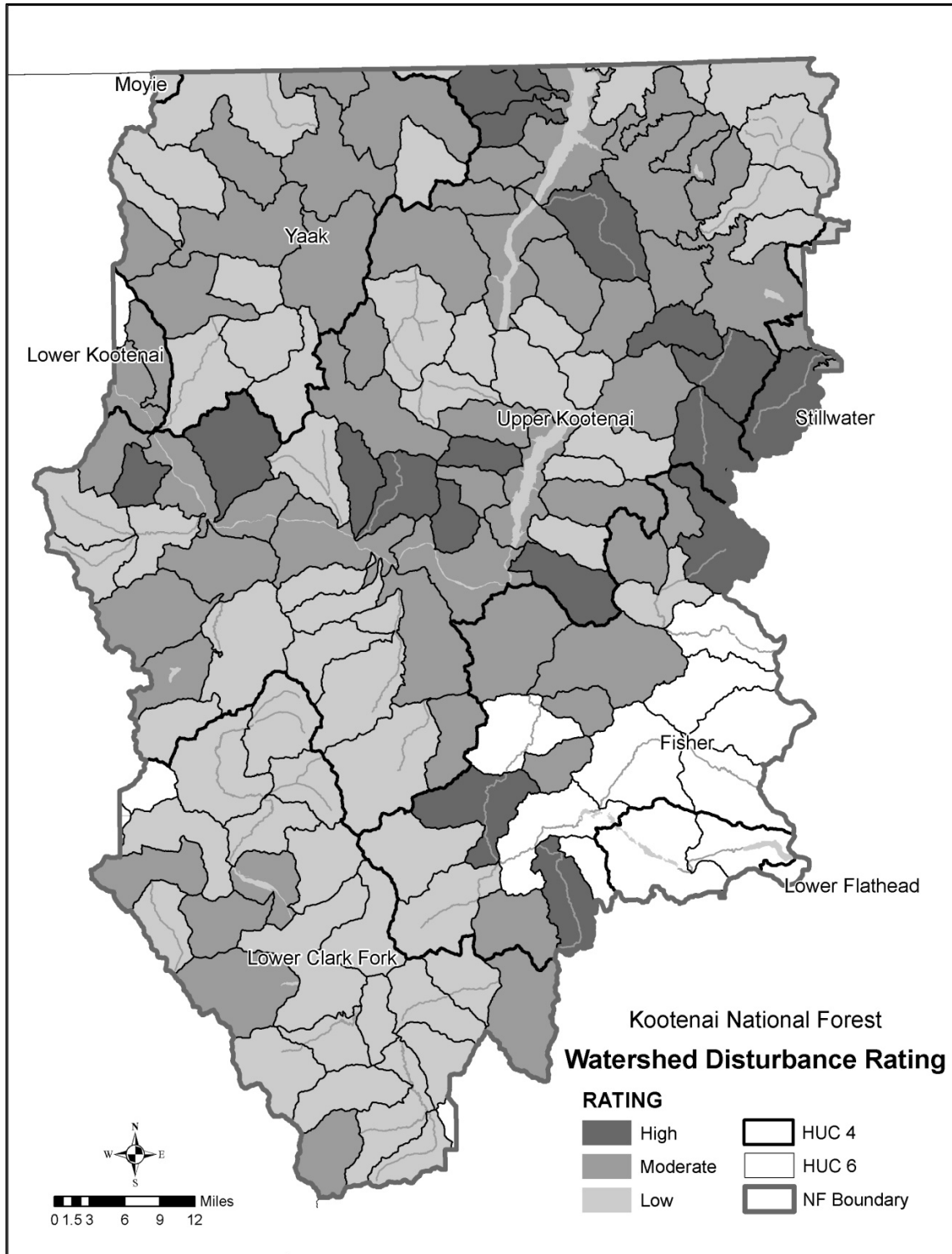
**Figure 17. KNF Watershed Sensitivity Rating**

**Table 24. Watershed Sensitivity Rating, Forestwide**

<b>Watershed Sensitivity Rating</b>	<b>Number of Subwatersheds (% of Forest)</b>
Low	8 (6%)
Moderate	82 (64%)
High	38 (30%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>

**Figure 18. Watershed Sensitivity Rating by Major Drainage Basin**

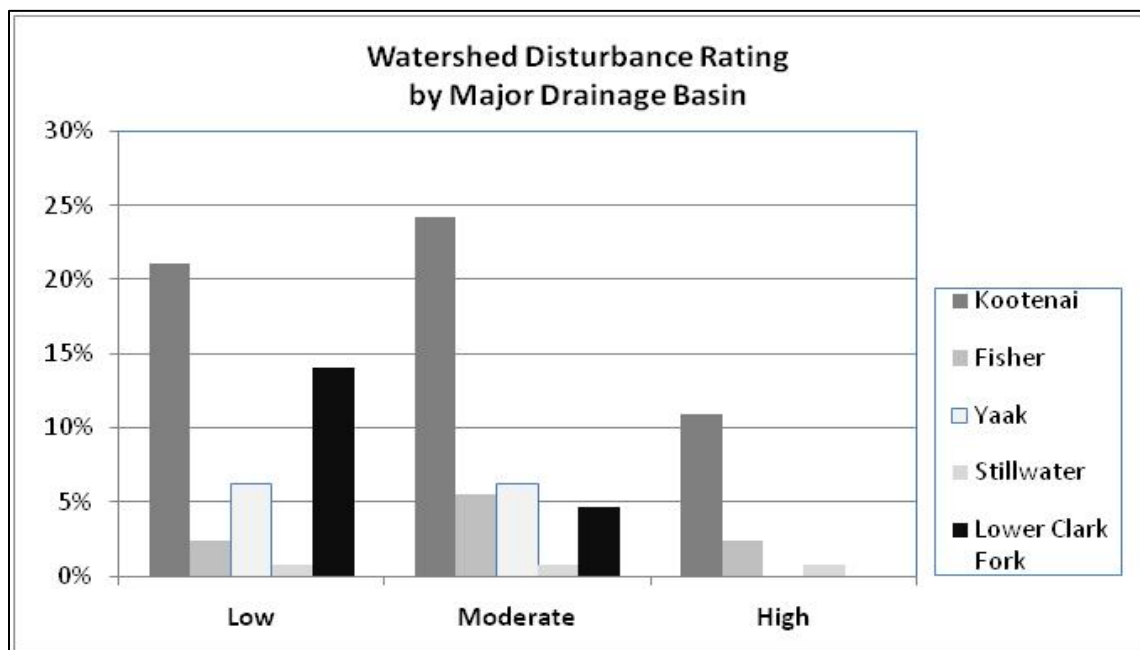
2) Watershed Disturbance Ratings, also used to evaluate watershed condition, provide an estimate of the relative amount of human-caused disturbances across subwatersheds and takes into account the following factors: percent equivalent clearcut acres, percent intact riparian, stream crossing density, percent detrimental compaction, and riparian area road density. See appendix D, for a more detailed discussion of the analysis for determining Watershed Disturbance Ratings. Based on that analysis, almost 86 percent of the Forest is considered to have a low to moderate level of human disturbances (see table 25), with most of the higher levels of human influences occurring in the southern portion of the Kootenai River Drainage (see figures 19 and 20) which is a function of the relatively larger land area associated with that drainage, as mentioned above. Table 25 shows the distribution of Watershed Disturbance Ratings across the Forest.



**Figure 19. KNF Watershed Disturbance Rating**

**Table 25. Watershed Disturbance Rating, Forestwide**

Watershed Disturbance Rating	Number of Subwatersheds (% of Forest)
Low	57 (45%)
Moderate	53 (41%)
High	18 (15%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>

**Figure 20. Watershed Disturbance Rating by Major Drainage Basin**

The following descriptions provide a basic summary for interpreting Watershed Condition Ratings. It should be noted that a given subwatershed may have different combinations of watershed sensitivity and watershed/riparian disturbance and these are only general descriptions to assist the reader. For example, it is possible for a subwatershed to have a low level of sensitivity and a high level of disturbance, providing an overall rating of “moderate.” Appendix D provides details of the analysis used to determine Watershed Condition Ratings for subwatersheds on the Forest. Final Watershed Condition Ratings may also include professional judgment in some cases. Review by resource specialists, with local ground-based knowledge and site-specific data, may have resulted in a change to a condition rating and those changes are noted in the fields “override” and “comments” (see appendix D).

Subwatersheds rated as “low” generally have a relative low inherent sensitivity to disturbances and low level of overall disturbance. These subwatersheds exhibit geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition. The drainage network is generally stable. Soil, aquatic, and riparian systems are assumed to be functional, in terms of supporting beneficial uses.

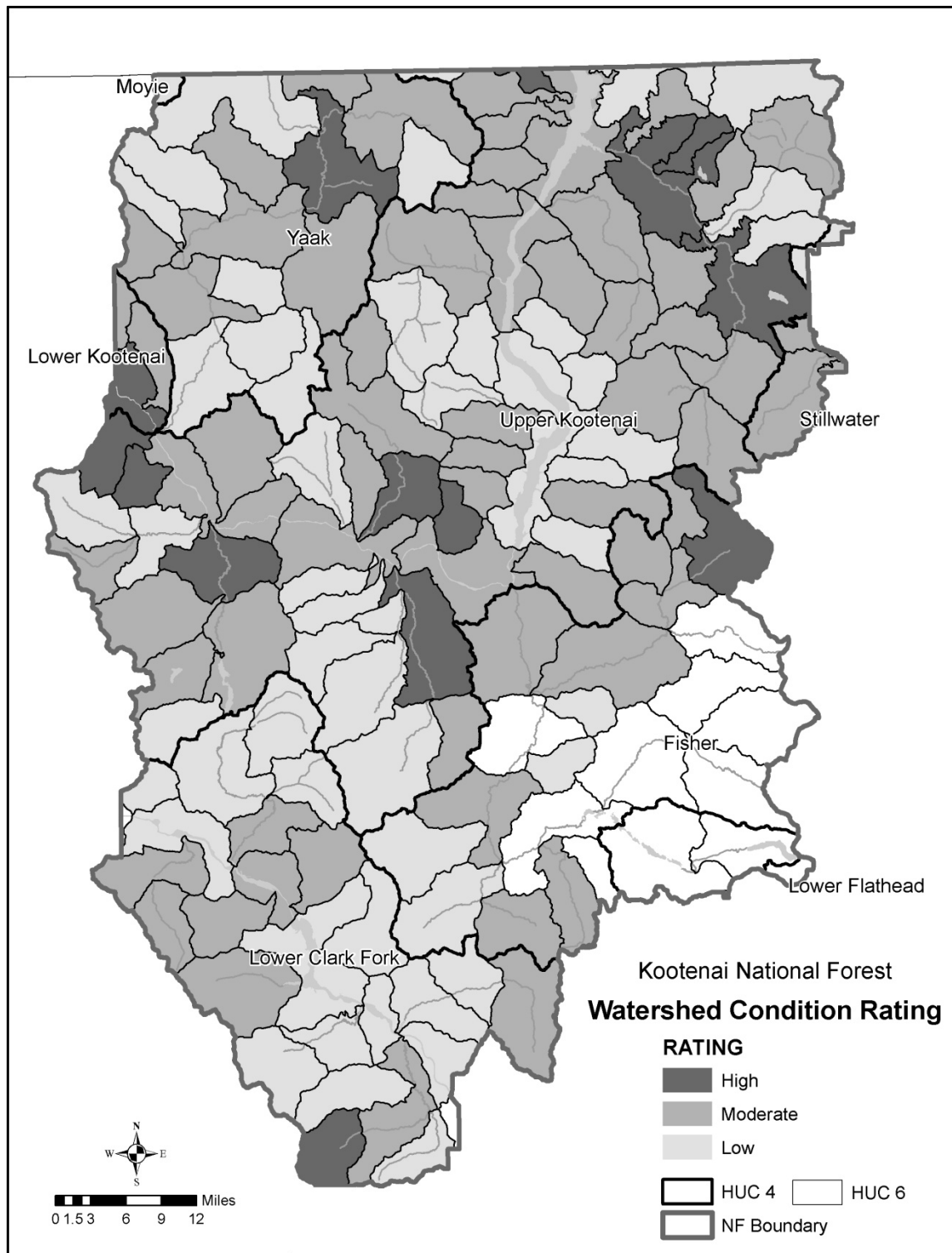
A rating of “moderate” generally indicates a subwatershed with a low to moderate inherent sensitivity and/or a low to moderate level of disturbances. Subwatersheds exhibit moderate geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition. Portions

of these subwatersheds may exhibit an unstable drainage network. Soil, aquatic, and riparian systems may or may not support beneficial uses.

In general, subwatersheds rated as “high” have a relatively higher sensitivity to natural and human-caused natural disturbances and relatively higher level of overall disturbances. These subwatersheds may have limited geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition. A majority of the drainage network may be unstable. It is assumed that beneficial uses may not be supported.

Subwatersheds with less than 25 percent land area under Forest Service jurisdiction were not considered in the analysis. This is due, in part, to limitations in data availability and an assumption that there are enough factors beyond agency control that reduces the agency’s ability to effectively change conditions at that scale. Detailed information related to the methodology used to determine watershed condition can be found in appendix D.

Figure 21 displays the Watershed Condition Ratings by subwatershed. Table 26 summarizes the proportion of the Forest subwatershed by category. The majority of the KNF has a moderate to low subwatershed condition. Figure 22 displays subwatershed conditions by major river basin(s). Data indicates that the Kootenai River drainage has a relatively higher proportion of land area with a moderate level of sensitivity to disturbance; is in a disturbed condition or a combination of both, which is a function of the large amount of the landscape in that drainage. Approximately 60 percent of all subwatersheds in the planning area occur in the Kootenai River basin (see figure 22).

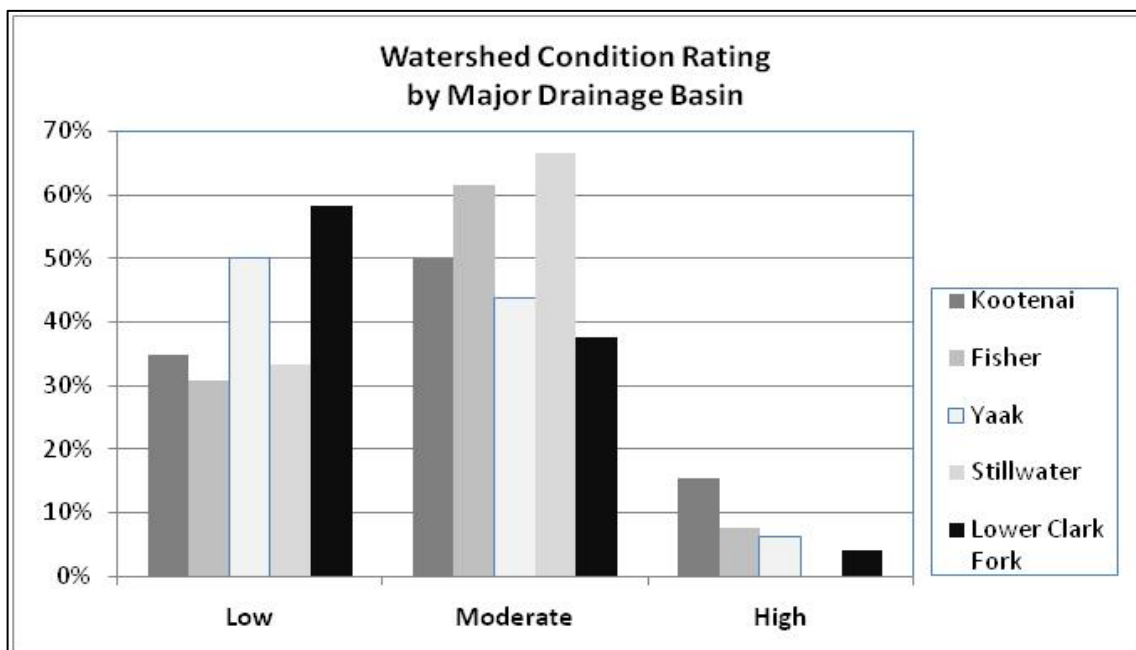


**Figure 21. Watershed Condition Rating**



**Table 26. Distribution of Final Watershed Condition Ratings**

Rating	Number of Subwatersheds (% of Forest)
Low	52 (41%)
Moderate	62 (48%)
High	14 (11%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>

**Figure 22. Watershed Condition Rating by Major Drainage Basin**

### *Water Quality*

Water quality is regulated under the authority of the Clean Water Act, and States assess the waters within their jurisdiction and identify stream segments and other water bodies whose water quality is “impaired” or generally not meeting water quality standards for beneficial uses. Currently, about one-half of the subwatersheds associated with the Forest include or have the potential to influence one or more of these listed segments.

Individual stream segments, lakes, and other water bodies have been listed as “Water Quality Limited Segments” (i.e., “impaired”) by the state of Montana (Montana DEQ 2010) and are described in subsection 303(d) of the Clean Water Act as waters that do not meet state standards; a broad term that includes water quality criteria, designated uses, and anti-degradation policies. These segments or water bodies involve 54 percent of the subwatersheds (N=141) on the Forest. The dominant pollutants currently affecting “impaired” water bodies are sediment and temperature. Other pollutants are listed for a small number of subwatersheds.

Subwatersheds with impaired waters are shown in tables 27 and 28. Subwatersheds in the following tables may be located in more than one GA and have been counted in each GA; therefore, the total number of watersheds is overstated in some cases.

**Table 27. Number of 303(d)-Listed Subwatersheds and Pollutants of Concern**

<b>Pollutant of Concern</b>	<b>Subwatersheds</b>
Cadmium	3
Lead	5
Metals	5
Nutrients	11
Sediment	29
Thermal modification	21
Zinc	2

**Table 28. 303(d)-Listed Subwatersheds by Major Drainage Basin**

<b>Pollutant of Concern</b>	<b>Bull Lake</b>	<b>Clark Fork River</b>	<b>Fisher River</b>	<b>Lake Koocanusa</b>	<b>Libby Creek</b>	<b>Tobacco River</b>	<b>Yaak River</b>
Cadmium	2				1		
Lead	1		3		1		
Metals	3				1		
Nutrients	2		1	1		1	7
Sediment	2	5	8	1	4	10	
Temperature	1	5	6	1	4	3	
Zinc					2		

## Soils

Volcanic ash from eruptions along the Pacific Northwest Cascade Range has significantly influenced forest soil on the KNF. Volcanic ash soils have lower bulk density, higher porosity, and higher water infiltration and retention than soils unaffected by ash. The capability to hold ample available moisture is thought to enhance site productivity. Unfortunately, ash-capped soils are also very susceptible to negative impacts from machine traffic, and when compacted, the soils may not readily recover over many years.

Presently, soil disturbance in forested ecosystems most commonly occurs from ground-based harvest and site preparation (mechanical and fire), but can also be associated with roads, grazing, and recreation. The effects of soil disturbance on soil productivity, soil quality, or site hydrologic function are dependent on the degree, extent, distribution, and duration of the impacts (Clayton et al. 1987, Craig and Howes 2007, Snider and Miller 1985); and, for projects, are site-specific rather than watershed based. Many forest soils have shown to be resilient to disturbances, while others are at risk of losing the productive capacity because of limitations in the inherent soil properties (i.e., shallow forest floor or thin mineral mantles over bedrock (Burger and Kelting 1999)).

Detrimental effects on soils are not permanent with regards to vegetative re-growth and depend primarily on soil texture, parent material, aspect, and the level of disturbance. Recovery time is typically between 30 to 70 years as second growth timber becomes established around “disturbed areas” (Dykstra and Curran 2002, Froehlich et al. 1985, Froehlich and McNabb 1983). However, soil displacement that mixes or moves the volcanic ash surface layer and reduces moisture holding capacity and productivity may continue to be impacted far beyond the 70 year timeframe.

Post-harvest data collection for soil impacts has occurred on the KNF over the past 23 years (1988-2010). Monitoring activities from 1988 through 1991 involved a walk-through procedure, which only provided a qualitative description of harvest activity effects. Beginning in 1992, soil sampling incorporated a line transect methodology and also included the previous walk-through procedures. Current sampling on the KNF follows soil sampling procedures and guidelines from the Forest Service Soil Disturbance Monitoring Protocol (Page-Dumroese et al. 2009) for site-specific analysis of management effects in an activity area. Data points collected during soil sampling transects fall into one of three categories: 1) no disturbance; 2) disturbance present, but not detrimental; and 3) detrimental soil disturbance. Detrimental disturbance is defined in FSM 2550 and Region 1 Supplement 2500-99-1.

The soil characteristics selected as indicators of management influence on soil productivity are compaction, rutting, burn severity, displacement, surface erosion, and mass movement. When management activities, such as timber harvest or burn treatment, cause the indicators to exceed the threshold established in the soil quality standards; the disturbance is considered detrimental, thus having the potential to impair site productivity. Authorized forest roads as defined in 36 CFR 212.1 are not considered part of the productive land base and are excluded from evaluation of disturbance from harvest activities, although they may be considered when analyzing effects on other soil functions.

Under direction in the 2011 Soil Quality Monitoring Guide, soil monitoring includes both timber management-related temporary roads and landings outside of activity areas. Such data was not included in the soil sampling protocol under previous direction in FSM 2550.

Intensive mechanized harvest prior to the early 1980s was widespread on private and Forest Service land and resulted in wide-ranging soil quality concerns (Kuennen 2005, Niehoff 2002). Between the early 1950s and early 1980s extensive unconstrained tractor skidding, dozer piling, windrowing, hot burning of slash and burn piles, and associated soil disturbance was widespread. During this time period, riparian harvest was still the norm and dozer piles were often up to 20 feet high with dozer piling-pushing covering between 80 to 90 percent of the ground in a sale unit. In the early 1980s, dozer piling was replaced with excavator skid lines (trails) running over slash material which resulted in considerably less soil disturbance. Some controls had been imposed, but compaction and displacement were still widespread between the early 1980s and early 1990s.

However, post-harvest soil monitoring over the past two decades has indicated that the extent of detrimental disturbance has declined over time as newer harvest equipment and procedures have been implemented (L. Kuennen, personal communication, 2008, Kuennen 2005, Niehoff 2002). As activities on the KNF moved away from dozer piling towards excavator piling and skyline yarding in the early 1980s, the amount of detrimental disturbance, especially compaction and displacement, was greatly reduced. Early post-harvest soil monitoring data (1992) showed that approximately half of the soil data collected did not meet regional soil quality standards and exceeded the 15 percent requirements. This deviation from the standard is assumed to be the result of the transition from clearcut to intermediate harvest activities, resulting in more equipment entries into a particular unit and more pile burning. Changes in harvest and site preparation methods quickly changed disturbance values on post-harvest sites to less than 15 percent and even less than 5 percent in many cases. Additional reasons for improvement include: more careful layout of harvest units and skid trail spacing, seasonal restrictions, fewer visits to harvest units, and an overall awareness of the importance of protecting long-term soil quality.

To date, the KNF has collected over 234,000 individual data points associated with post-harvest linear transect soil monitoring, which includes approximately 13,033 acres. At the same time an additional 9,279 acres involving 257 units were reviewed between 1988-2010 involving walk-through soil monitoring procedures. To display overall trends and post-harvest conditions, the linear transect data points collected from 1992 to 2010 have been compiled in table 29. It should be kept in mind that the units monitored were randomly selected following harvest activities. Soil monitoring data collected from 1988 to 1991 only included walk-through reviews and thus is not represented in the table 29.

**Table 29. Summary of Disturbance Ranges and Trends for Post-Harvest Soil Conditions Monitored over Three Decades (1992 to 2010)**

Range of Detrimental Soil Disturbance	# of Units	% of Total
0 – 5	206	52
6 – 10	129	32
11 – 15	48	12
>15	15	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>100%</b>

Observations from field visits and monitoring of units that were harvested from as early as the 1930s show that many affected soils are recovering. In general, main skid trails and landings, which were heavily disturbed in the past and involved considerable soil displacement, often remain in some disturbed condition; while many of the side skids and other disturbances are

improving to levels that show either minimal or no longer traceable impacts to soils and surrounding vegetation. Recall that the signs of remaining disturbance may often be more directly related to the land type or soil characteristics present than the past activity which occurred.

Post-harvest monitoring results are displayed by decade in table 30 and contribute to the estimated range of detrimental soil disturbance. Monitoring has included units that were logged with various types of ground-based equipment, skyline and cable yarding, as well as some horse logging. More recent methods, such as combinations of feller-bunchers, forwarders, rubber tired skidders, skyline yarding, and helicopter harvest, are also included. During the two decades monitored, more rubber tired skidder, forwarder, feller-buncher units were monitored as these harvest procedures were expected to display much higher impacts to soils than would be expected in similar units; and similar physical conditions where skyline harvest activities had occurred along with the fact that these procedures were more actively being used.

Regional soil standards require that 15 percent detrimental disturbance within an activity area should not be exceeded. Disturbance levels provided in table 30 shows that impacts in more than 90 percent of the field visited and monitored units remained below 15 percent after harvest activities, while 99 percent of the units sampled in the past decade remained below 15 percent. Given current management strategies, the KNF is meeting regional soil quality requirements and supporting an upward trend, compared to previous harvest methods. It should also be noted that most burn piles continue to fall outside of the 15 percent detrimental disturbance category. However, it should be noted that there has been an increase in the number and size of these activities, which coincides with machinery and harvest practice changes over time. Between years 1988-1991 soils data was collected using a random walk-through procedure, therefore, cannot be represented in table 30.

**Table 30. Summary of Disturbance Ranges and Trends for Post-Harvest Soil Conditions Monitored over the past Two Decades (1992-2010)**

Range of Detrimental Soil Disturbance	1990s		2000s	
	# of Units	%	# of Units	%
0 – 5	72	56	134	50
6 – 10	34	26	95	36
11 – 15	13.5	11	35	13
>15	9.5	7	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100%</b>

To approximate current soil conditions, residual impacts from past management-related disturbances on soils were estimated from the annual KNF Soil Monitoring reports and supporting KNF soil monitoring database. The KNF soil monitoring database consists of field data which was randomly selected and field monitored to determine post-harvest soil disturbance values. As a result, this database contains only a small representative percent (5-15 percent) of the total annual harvest actions for a given year. Many of the land areas (soil polygons) monitored in the field to determine soil disturbance values were treated or harvested more than once. The potential detrimental soil disturbance values are based on empirically derived coefficients that were obtained and averaged from numerous monitoring sites throughout the KNF (Kuennen 2005). The assumptions are limited to the harvest and slash disposal methods for which disturbance coefficients have been determined, and the coefficients assume that BMPs

have been implemented. The end detrimental soil disturbance figure is a composition of all disturbances and does not separate each category of disturbance values, where present, within a given unit. Although the KNF soil monitoring database originated in 1988, the average disturbance values listed in table 31 below are based on 48,660 soil monitoring sites collected between 2000-2005 which is more closely aligned with current management activities than data sampled prior to 2000 (L. Kuennen, personal communication, 2009). Thus, the value of 8 percent detrimental soil disturbance for summer tractor is a “statistical summary” which takes into account not only the skid trails but temporary roads, mechanized piling, and fire lines within the units being surveyed. Detailed spreadsheet results are available in the project file and past Forest Plan monitoring reports.

**Table 31. Disturbance Coefficients**

Equipment Class	Season of Operation	Disturbance Coefficient
Dozer	NA	15
Tractor	Summer	8
Tractor	Winter	4
Forwarder	Summer	4
Forwarder	Winter	2
Excavator Piling	NA	2
Skyline	NA	1
Cable Yarding	NA	1
Site Preparation	NA	2
Fireline Construction	NA	1
Helicopter	NA	0
Grazing	NA	2
Horse Logging	NA	2

In general, the amount of heavily disturbed soils increases directly with the machinery operations and the amount of area impacted where heavy equipment makes repeated passes over the same ground, particularly during times of high soil moisture.

The detrimental soil disturbance percent is not necessarily an additive to other past management activities. This is because the percentages listed for each management activity includes some units with excavator piling, fire line construction, and/or grazing. In addition, disturbance from these activities usually overlaps at least a portion of the skidding disturbance.

Tractor logging acres are split in half, which represents logging before and after 1992; (15 to 8 percent respectively). This reduction of soil disturbance exceeding 15 percent is based on the change from dozer operations, which resulted in 85-95 percent of a given unit acres being disturbed to a much smaller percent of disturbance using excavator equipment.

Based on field monitoring, most activities that occurred before 1990 have undergone some level of recovery and using professional judgment and local ground based knowledge, the specialist determined an equal split gives a representative estimate.

### *Riparian*

Riparian ecosystem areas represent some of the most dynamic and ecologically diverse areas across the landscape. Most riparian areas are obvious because of abundant water and unique vegetation and soil characteristics. Ecological drivers such as geology, climate, glaciations, and stream gradient all influence the type, complexity, quantity, and distribution of these ecosystems and there is great variability in the size and complexity of riparian areas across the Forest.

Wetlands, such as swamps, bogs, fens, marshes, and wet meadows, are also considered riparian areas. Wetlands occur in sites with seasonally or permanently high water tables, as well as on the margins of ponds and lakes and commonly support characteristic plant or animal communities which require those unique conditions for survival. Although riparian ecosystems cover a relatively small proportion of the Forest, their ecological significance within the landscape exceeds their limited distribution. Riparian ecosystems can be highly responsive to both natural and human disturbances, although they may respond to restoration activities more quickly than other habitats due to the dynamic interaction between, water, vegetation, and soils.

Healthy riparian areas with a typical abundance of trees, shrubs, forbs, and grasses help to slow flood waters and reduce the likelihood of downstream flooding. Riparian areas also help to improve or maintain water quality by filtering runoff, sediment, and nutrients. Water slowed by riparian areas enters the groundwater table where it is released at a later time. Riparian areas also provide for stream shading by keeping water temperatures cool for aquatic organisms. Fish also depend on healthy riparian areas for supporting stable channels and habitat, reliable stream flows, clean water, food, and hiding cover. Benefits for terrestrial wildlife include food, cover, and nesting habitat as well as migration corridors to other habitats. Riparian areas are also attractive and inviting to humans because of proximity to water and aesthetic and recreational purposes.

The conditions of riparian areas can be an indicator of overall ecosystem quality. There are an estimated 385,000 acres of riparian areas across the planning unit, and on average, these areas are considered to be approximately 91 percent intact. In general, many riparian areas on the Forest are believed to be functioning at or near their potential; and most degraded areas are in a stable condition or improving. It is estimated that almost all subwatersheds on the Forest have a low to moderate amount of disturbance. Although these areas are relatively functional and there has been improvement in some areas, there are localized areas where riparian areas may be functioning below potential.

Roads can have a relatively high impact on riparian areas and overall road density in a watershed can be an indicator of these effects. There are an estimated 2,000 miles of road located in riparian areas, which amounts to approximately 14 percent of all road miles on the planning unit, with an average road density of 2.9 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>. Another potential indicator of riparian condition effects to water quality and aquatic habitats is the number of road crossings within a subwatershed. Although all stream crossings are not created equally, higher numbers of stream crossings and density indicate the potential for negative effects to riparian areas, water quality, and aquatic habitats. There are an estimated 12,000 stream crossings across the entire planning unit and an average of 2.4 stream crossings/mi<sup>2</sup>, for all subwatersheds on the Forest.

### *Aquatic Habitat/Species*

Species distribution and abundance have changed from historic conditions. Changes in the physical environment and habitat alteration have been among the main contributors to these changes, resulting from historic land management practices and lack of protective measures for aquatic resources. There are indications that historic distribution and abundance shifts continued during the term of the 1987 Forest Plan; however, the rates of change may have been somewhat tempered or even improved with the implementation of protection measures including INFISH amendments and other BMPs.

Research indicates a need to identify aquatic habitats that support the most productive, diverse, and otherwise critical populations (Rieman et al. 2000). These habitats provide the best opportunities for ensuring the short-term persistence of aquatic species and provide a nucleus for rehabilitating more complete networks in the future. In these "conservation" watersheds, land management activities should focus on the protection and maintenance of high quality aquatic habitats and strong native fish populations, while minimizing the risk to existing values and retaining ecological health. An emphasis on conservation in these subwatersheds does not necessarily mean forest management activities be deferred, but does imply that any activity must clearly minimize or eliminate risks that might compromise the ability of native fish populations to persist (Rieman et al. 2000).

In addition, long-term persistence of aquatic species depends on more than the conservation of existing habitats and populations. Protection of fish habitats and populations alone is not sufficient to maintain biological diversity as these reserves will never be large or well distributed enough (Franklin 1993). Long-term persistence will also depend on restoring watershed processes that create and maintain habitats across stream networks (Rieman et al. 2000); and the use of ecologically compatible land use policies to ensure the long-term productivity of aquatic and riparian ecosystems (Thurow et al. 1997). Site-specific restoration can address or treat specific elements of watershed-scale problems, while larger restoration actions at the subwatershed scale are expected to provide the most benefits for aquatic species, their habitats, and other aquatic dependent resources.

The concept of "priority watersheds" as described in INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995b) is further refined in the revised Forest Plan as "conservation" and "restoration" watersheds. Priority watersheds in INFISH were designated based on the following criteria:

- Watersheds with excellent habitat or strong assemblages of inland native fish, with a priority on bull trout populations;
- Watersheds that provide for meta-population objectives; and
- Degraded watersheds with a high restoration potential.

INFISH states that priority watersheds are intended to provide a pattern of protection across the landscape, where habitat for inland native fish would receive special attention and treatment. Priority watersheds would have the highest priority for restoration, monitoring, and watershed analysis. Priority areas in good condition would serve as anchors for the potential recovery of depressed stocks, and would also provide colonists for adjacent areas where habitat had been degraded by land management or natural events (USDA Forest Service 1995a). Subwatersheds (6th level HUC) in this condition are considered "conservation" watersheds in the revised Forest Plan. Subwatersheds that are "areas of lower quality habitat, with high potential for restoration, would become future sources of good habitat with the implementation of a comprehensive

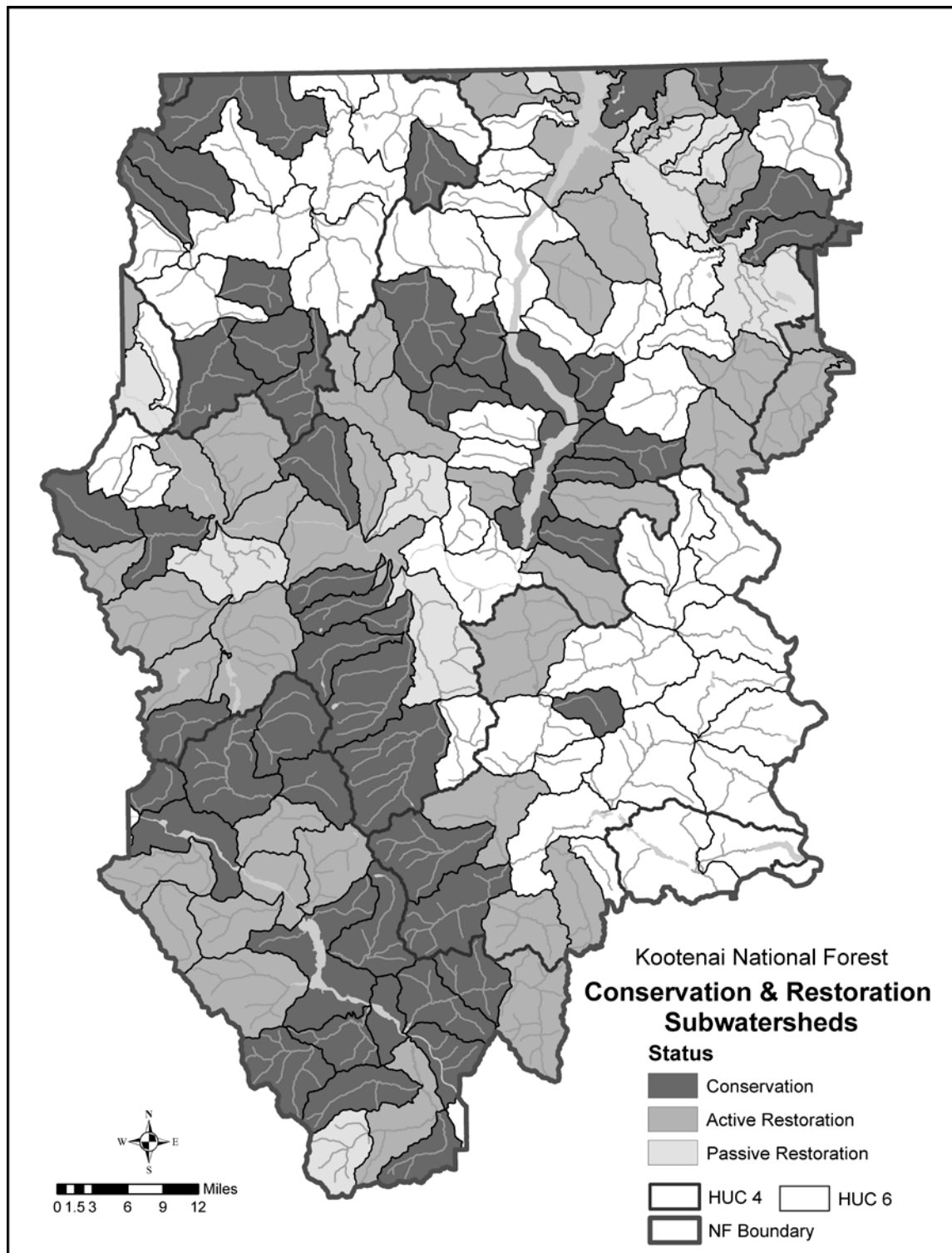


restoration program (USDA Forest Service 1995b)" are labeled "restoration" watersheds in the revised Forest Plan.

Subwatersheds were identified as "conservation" or "restoration" areas, for an analysis of existing condition, based on a synthesis of the physical condition and status, and that of associated aquatic species status (see appendix D for further description of the process). Conservation subwatersheds are intended to protect stronghold populations of native salmonids and complement restoration efforts. Conservation watersheds were identified using the following considerations: areas with excellent habitat, water quality, and strong populations of native fish species. Restoration subwatersheds were identified by looking for areas with: degraded habitat conditions, water quality limitations, depressed populations of native fish species, a combination of the above, and a relatively higher potential for improvement.

There are currently 51 conservation subwatersheds and 46 restoration subwatersheds on the Forest (figure 23), as identified by the aquatic conservation strategy and salmonid assessment for the Forest.

Long-term persistence of aquatic species depends on more than the conservation of existing habitats and populations. Protection of fish habitats and populations alone is not sufficient to maintain biological diversity, as these reserves will never be large or well distributed enough (Franklin 1993). Long-term persistence will also depend on restoring watershed processes that create and maintain habitats across stream networks (Rieman et al. 2000) and the use of ecologically compatible land use policies to ensure the long-term productivity of aquatic and riparian ecosystems (Thurow et al. 1997). Site-specific restoration can address or treat specific elements of watershed-scale problems, while larger restoration at the subwatershed scale are expected to provide the most benefits for aquatic species, their habitats, and other aquatic dependent resources. Restoration subwatersheds generally have degraded habitat conditions, but have a high potential for improvement. Restoration activities would be accomplished by identifying and treating risk factors (i.e., unstable roads or poorly located and/or drained roads, certain invasive plants and animals, major obstructions to physical and biological connectivity) which threaten aquatic and riparian ecosystem integrity and are likely to adversely influence achievement of desired conditions.



**Figure 23. Conservation & Restoration Subwatersheds**

The following are general statements about the current conditions of some native fish and amphibian species. There are five fish species and two amphibian species listed as threatened or endangered, or on the regional forester's Sensitive Species list (USDA Forest Service 2011b).

### **Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) (Threatened)**

Current bull trout distribution on the Forest is shown in figure 24. According to Lee et al. (1997), bull trout are widely distributed across the Columbia River Basin, although their current range is about 60 percent of historic distribution (figure 25). Although many populations of native aquatic species are stable or improving, bull trout are considered to be in decline across their range; and local extirpations have occurred across the planning area. Watersheds that are predicted to be strong spawning and rearing areas represent less than 10 percent of the historic range. Migratory life histories have been lost or are limited throughout the current range due to the introduction of non-native species, and intensive land management activities such as road construction and timber harvest that have affected habitat conditions for the species.

#### *Status of the Species*

The bull trout in the coterminous United States was listed as threatened on November 1, 1999 (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service 1999a). Earlier rulemakings had listed the Columbia River distinct population segment of bull trout as threatened (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 1998 June). The Columbia River distinct population segment occurs throughout the entire Columbia River basin within the United States and its tributaries, excluding bull trout found in the Jarbidge River, Nevada. The distinct population segment serves as an interim recovery unit in the absence of an approved recovery plan (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 2008b). Critical habitat has been designated for bull trout (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 2010 October).

#### *Distribution*

Bull trout occur in the northwestern portion of North America from Nevada to the Yukon Territory (Behnke 2002). Bull trout are native to the streams and rivers within the Columbia River Basin in western Montana and Idaho. Bull trout populations on the KNF are included in the Columbia River distinct population segment.

The Columbia River bull trout distinct population segment is represented by relatively widespread populations that have declined in overall range and numbers of fish. There have been numerous local extirpations reported throughout the Columbia River basin. A majority of Columbia River bull trout occur in isolated, fragmented habitats that support low numbers of fish and are inaccessible to migratory bull trout. The few remaining bull trout “strongholds” in the Columbia River basin tend to be found in large areas of contiguous habitats in the Snake River basin of central Idaho mountains, upper Clark Fork and Flathead Rivers in Montana, and several streams in the Blue Mountains in Washington and Oregon.

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Bull trout have more specific habitat requirements than most other salmonids. Habitat components that influence bull trout distribution and abundance include water temperature, cover, channel form and stability, substrate for spawning and rearing, and migratory corridors. Bull trout are found in colder streams and require colder water than most other salmonids for incubation, juvenile rearing, and spawning. Spawning and rearing areas are often associated with cold-water springs, groundwater infiltration, and/or the coldest streams in a watershed.

Throughout their lives, bull trout require complex forms of cover, including large woody debris, undercut banks, boulders, and pools (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 2002). Bull trout exhibit three life history types: adfluvial, fluvial, and resident, all which require cold water temperatures <60°F during portions of their life cycle to persist. Bull trout are opportunistic feeders with food habits primarily a function of size and life-history strategy. Resident and juvenile migratory bull

trout prey on terrestrial and aquatic insects, macrozooplankton, and small fish (Donald and Alger 1993). Adult migratory bull trout are primarily piscivorous, known to feed on various fish species (Fraley and Shepard 1989).

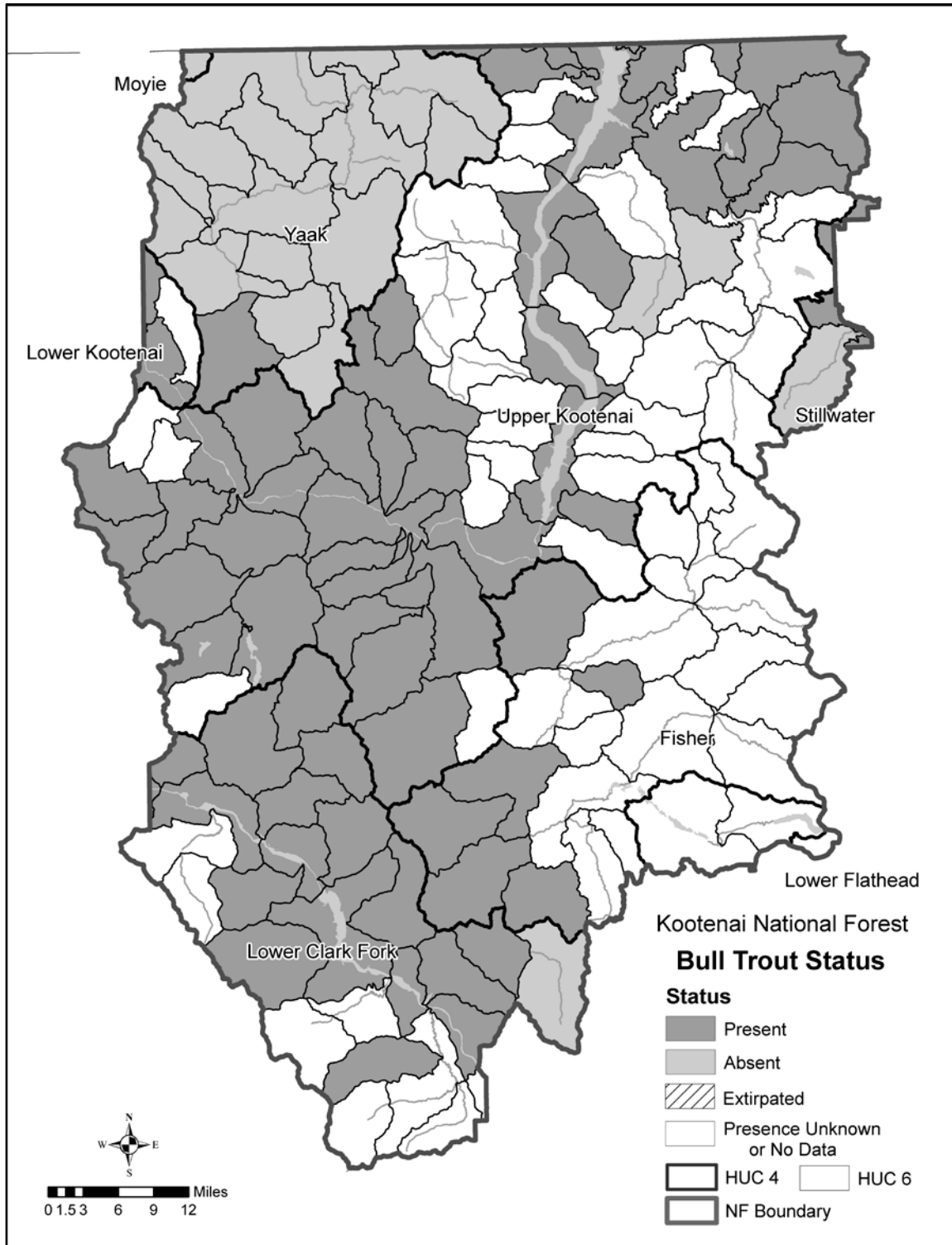
For spawning and early rearing, bull trout require loose, clean gravel relatively free of fine sediments. Bull trout typically spawn from August to November during periods of decreasing water temperatures. However, migratory bull trout frequently begin spawning migrations as early as April, and have been known to move upstream as far as 155 miles to spawning grounds (Fraley and Shepard 1989). Because bull trout have a relatively long incubation and development period within spawning gravel (greater than 200 days), transport of bedload in unstable channels may kill young bull trout. Bull trout use migratory corridors to move from spawning and rearing habitats to foraging and overwintering habitats and back. Different habitats provide bull trout with diverse resources, and migratory corridors allow local populations to connect, which may increase the potential for gene flow and support or refounding of populations.

Maintaining bull trout habitat requires stream channel and flow stability (Rieman and McIntyre 1993). Juvenile and adult bull trout frequently inhabit side channels, stream margins, and pools with suitable cover (Sexauer and James 1997). These areas are sensitive to activities that directly or indirectly affect stream channel stability and alter natural flow patterns. For example, altered stream flow in the fall may disrupt bull trout during the spawning period and channel instability may decrease survival of eggs and young juveniles in the gravel during winter through spring (Pratt 1992, Pratt and Huston 1993).

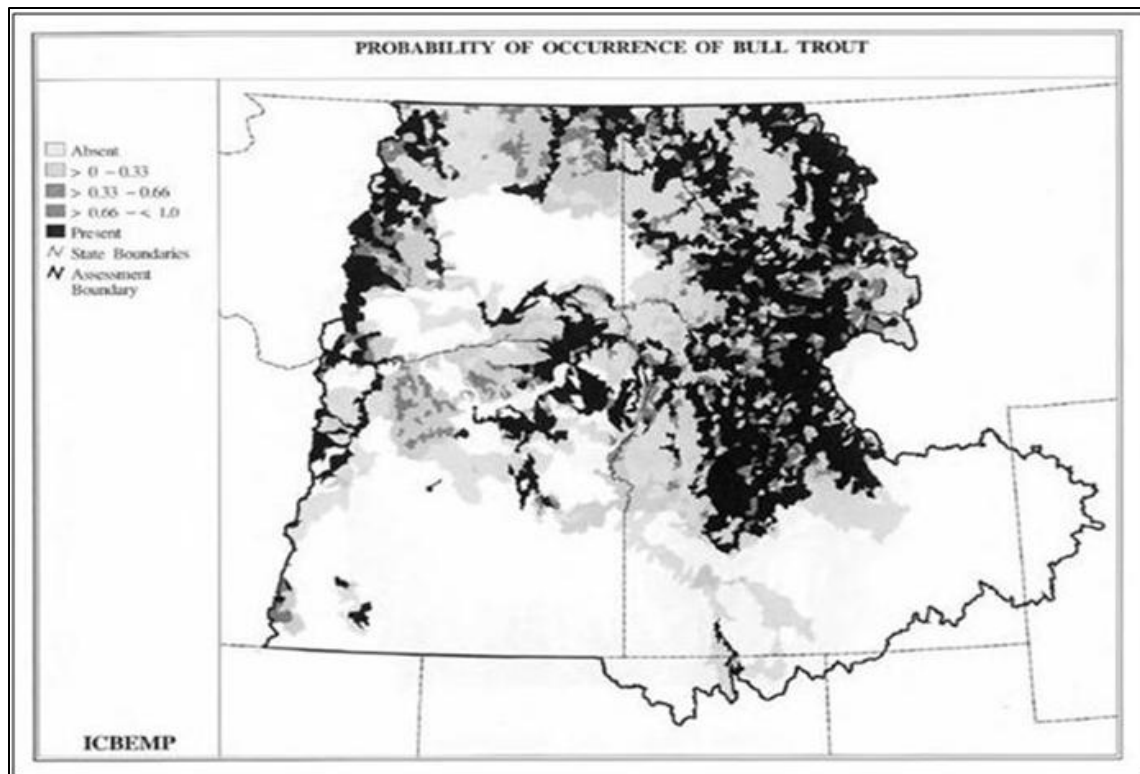
In summer, key aquatic habitat elements for bull trout include: (1) spawning habitat with water quality and quantity (including flow regimes) conditions and substrates favorable to incubation and larval development; (2) rearing habitat with water quality (including temperature conditions) and floodplain connectivity to form and maintain physical habitat conditions and support juvenile growth and mobility; (3) rearing habitat with foraging to support juvenile development; (4) cover habitat, including shade, submerged and overhanging large wood, log jams and beaver dams, aquatic vegetation, large rocks and boulders, side channels, and undercut banks; and (5) migration corridors for adults and juveniles free of obstruction and excessive predation with favorable water quantity and quality conditions.

### *Core Areas*

The draft recovery plan (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 2002) identified a bull trout core area as the closest approximation of a biologically functioning unit for bull trout. By definition, a core area includes a combination of core habitat (i.e., habitat that could supply all elements for the long-term security of bull trout) and a core population (a group of one or more local bull trout populations that exist within core habitat) constitutes the basic unit on which to gauge recovery (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 2002).



**Figure 24. Currently known Bull Trout Distribution**



**Figure 25. Probable Bull Trout Historic Range (from Lee et al. 1997)**

Core areas require both habitat and bull trout to function, and the number and characteristics of local populations inhabiting a core area provide a relative indication of the core areas likelihood to persist (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 2008b). A core area is a system of watersheds within a larger basin. Each watershed is the habitat for a local population that interacts with other local populations throughout the larger basin. Local populations within a core area have the potential to interact because of connected aquatic habitat. A local population is defined as a group of bull trout that spawn within a particular stream or portion of a stream system. A local population is considered to be the smallest group of fish that is known to represent an interacting reproductive unit. In most areas, a local population is represented by a single headwater tributary or complex of headwater tributaries where spawning occurs. Gene flow may occur between local populations (i.e., those within a core population), but is assumed to be infrequent compared with that among individuals within a local population.

The bull trout draft recovery plan describes 121 bull trout core areas across the species range in five states (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 2002) and the KNF has lands within six core areas (Cabinet Gorge Reservoir, Noxon Reservoir, Clark Fork River, Bull Lake, Kootenai River, and Lake Koocanusa).

#### **Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) (Sensitive)**

This subspecies was petitioned for listing under ESA, although listing was determined to be “not warranted” by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Current westslope cutthroat trout distribution on the Forest is shown in figure 26. Westslope cutthroat trout are still widely distributed, but remaining populations may be seriously compromised by habitat loss and genetic introgression (Lee et al. 1997) (see figure 27), although current populations are stable or improving in some cases. This subspecies is estimated to occur in 60 percent of its historic range (Shepard et al.

2005). Migration barriers (dams, irrigation diversions, road-stream crossings) have isolated or eliminated habitat once available to migratory populations.

### *Status of the Species*

Westslope cutthroat trout is a state species of special concern in Montana (S2). This species is a Region 1 Sensitive Species.

### *Distribution*

Westslope cutthroat trout occur along both sides of the Continental Divide from Yellowstone National Park into British Columbia and Alberta; additionally, there are several disjunct populations in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia (Behnke 2002). Westslope cutthroat trout occur on the KNF (see figure 26).

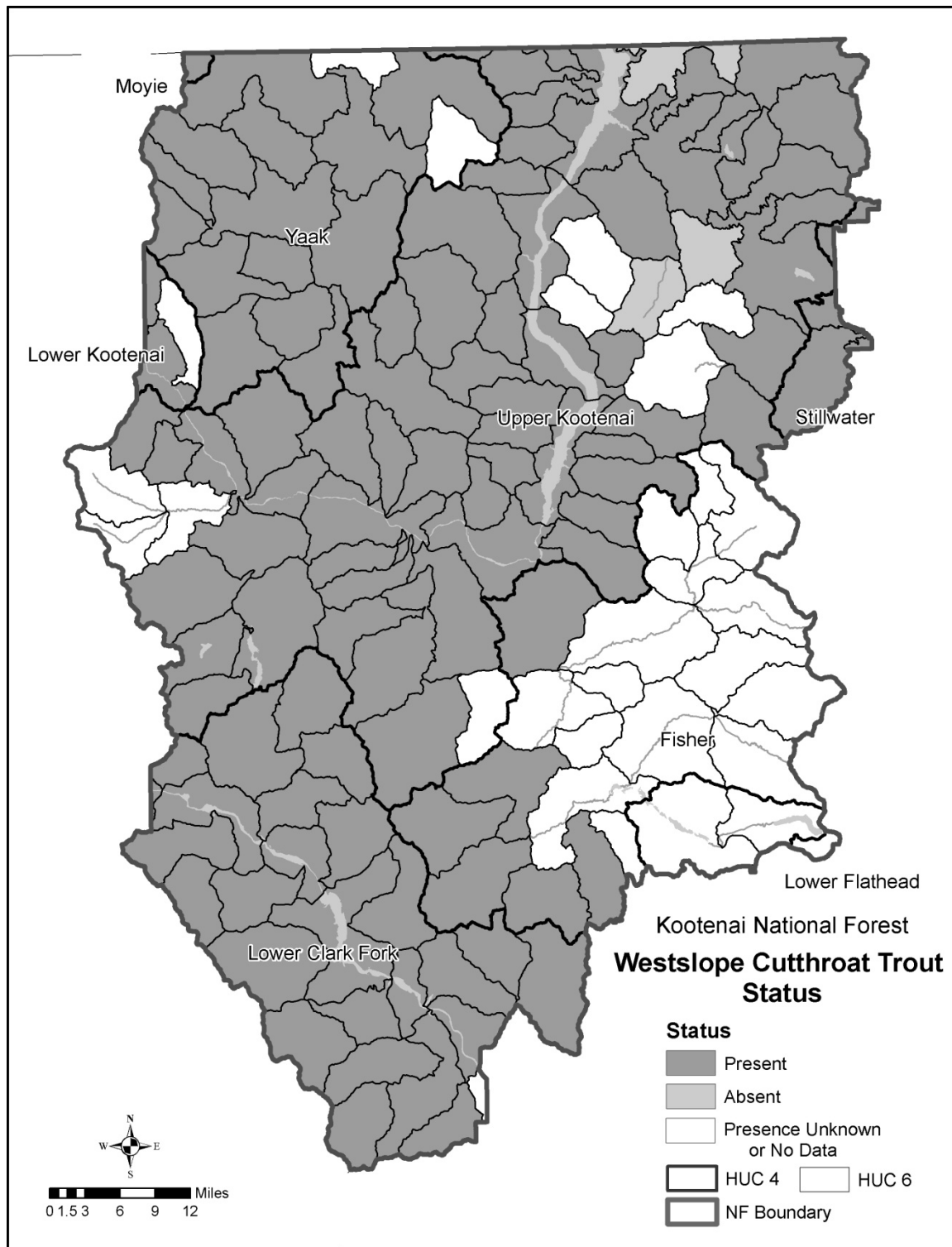
### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Westslope cutthroat trout live in small mountain streams, main rivers, and large natural lakes. They require well-oxygenated water, clean, well-sorted gravels with minimal fine sediments for successful spawning, temperatures less than 70°F, and a complexity of instream habitat structure such as large woody debris and overhanging banks for cover.

Westslope cutthroat trout spawn in small tributary streams on clean gravel substrate, where mean water depth is 17 to 20 cm and mean water velocity is 0.3 to 0.4 m/sec, and they tend to spawn in natal streams (McIntyre and Rieman 1995). Adfluvial populations live in large lakes in the upper Columbia drainage and spawn in lake tributaries. Fluvial populations live and grow in rivers and spawn in tributaries. Resident populations complete the entire life history in tributaries. All three life-history forms may occur in a single basin (McIntyre and Rieman 1995). Migrants may spawn in the lower reaches of the same streams used by resident fishes. Maturing adfluvial fishes move into the vicinity of tributaries in fall and winter and remain there until they begin to migrate upstream in spring. Of migratory spawners, some remain in tributaries during summer months, but most return to the main, river or lake, soon after spawning (Behnke 1992).

Adults prefer large pools and slow velocity areas, stream reaches with numerous pools, and some form of cover generally has the highest adult fish densities. Juveniles of migratory populations may spend 1 to 4 years in their natal streams, and then move (usually in spring or early summer, and/or in fall in some systems) to a main river or lake where they remain until they spawn (McIntyre and Rieman 1995, Spahr et al. 1991). Many fry disperse downstream after emergence (McIntyre and Rieman 1995). Juveniles tend to overwinter in interstitial spaces in the substrate. Larger individuals congregate in pools in winter.

In cold, higher elevation streams, growth rates are slower than warmer streams with some fish living up to 12 years, but only attaining lengths of seven to eight inches. Adfluvial and stocks in warmer waters reach lengths of twelve to fifteen inches. Westslope cutthroat trout spawn between March and July when water temperatures are about 50°F. Maturity also depends on location ranging from 4 to 6 years and sizes of 4 to 14 inches. Diets are primarily aquatic invertebrates; although larger fish, at times, will habitually or mainly feed on other fish.



**Figure 26. Currently known Westslope Cutthroat Trout Distribution**



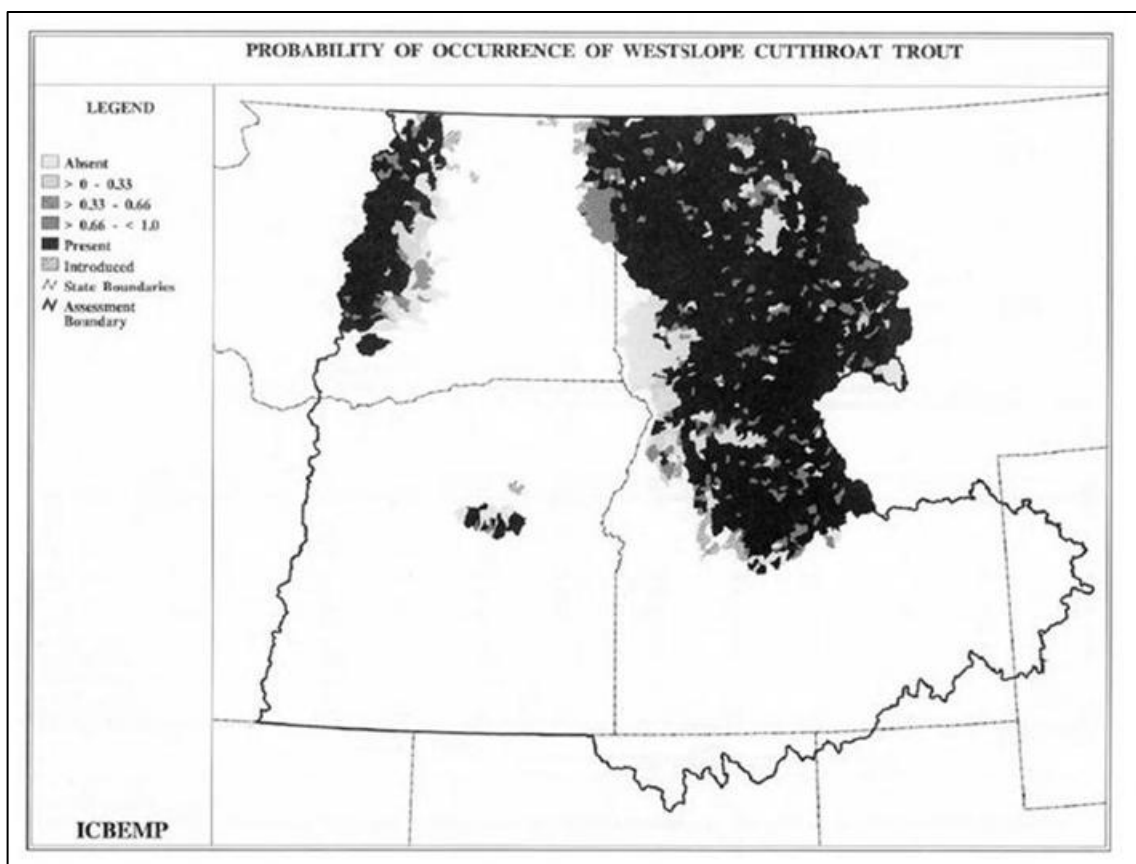


Figure 27. Probable Historic Westslope Cutthroat Trout Distribution (Lee et al. 1997)

#### **Interior Redband Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss gairdneri*) (Sensitive)**

The allopatric form (i.e., not found in the same areas as steelhead trout) of interior redband trout is found in the Kootenai River drainage. Current interior redband trout distribution on the Forest is shown in figure 28. Distribution of the species throughout the Columbia Basin is shown in figure 29 (Lee et al. 1997). Historically, this species was widely distributed throughout the Columbia River Basin, although it was not widespread on the KNF. Current populations on the KNF range from strong to depressed. Hybridization and competition are its main threats.

#### *Status of the Species*

Inland redband trout is a state species of special concern in Montana (S1) and included on the Region 1 Sensitive Species list (USDA Forest Service 2011b).

#### *Distribution*

Inland redband trout are found in the interior Columbia River basin: from east of the Cascades, upstream to geologic barriers such as Shoshone Falls on the Snake River, Kootenai Falls on the Kootenai River, and in the upper Fraser River (Behnke 2002).

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Inland redband trout are found in a range of stream habitats. They prefer cool streams with temperatures less than 70°F; however, they can survive daily cyclic temperatures up to 80°F for a short period of time (Wydoski and Whitney 2003). Resident stream redband trout may attain a

maximum size ranging from six to eighteen inches depending on location. Spawning occurs in the spring between February and June depending on temperature and location. Diets are primarily drifting invertebrates, both terrestrial and aquatic. Larger fish will occasionally consume other fish.

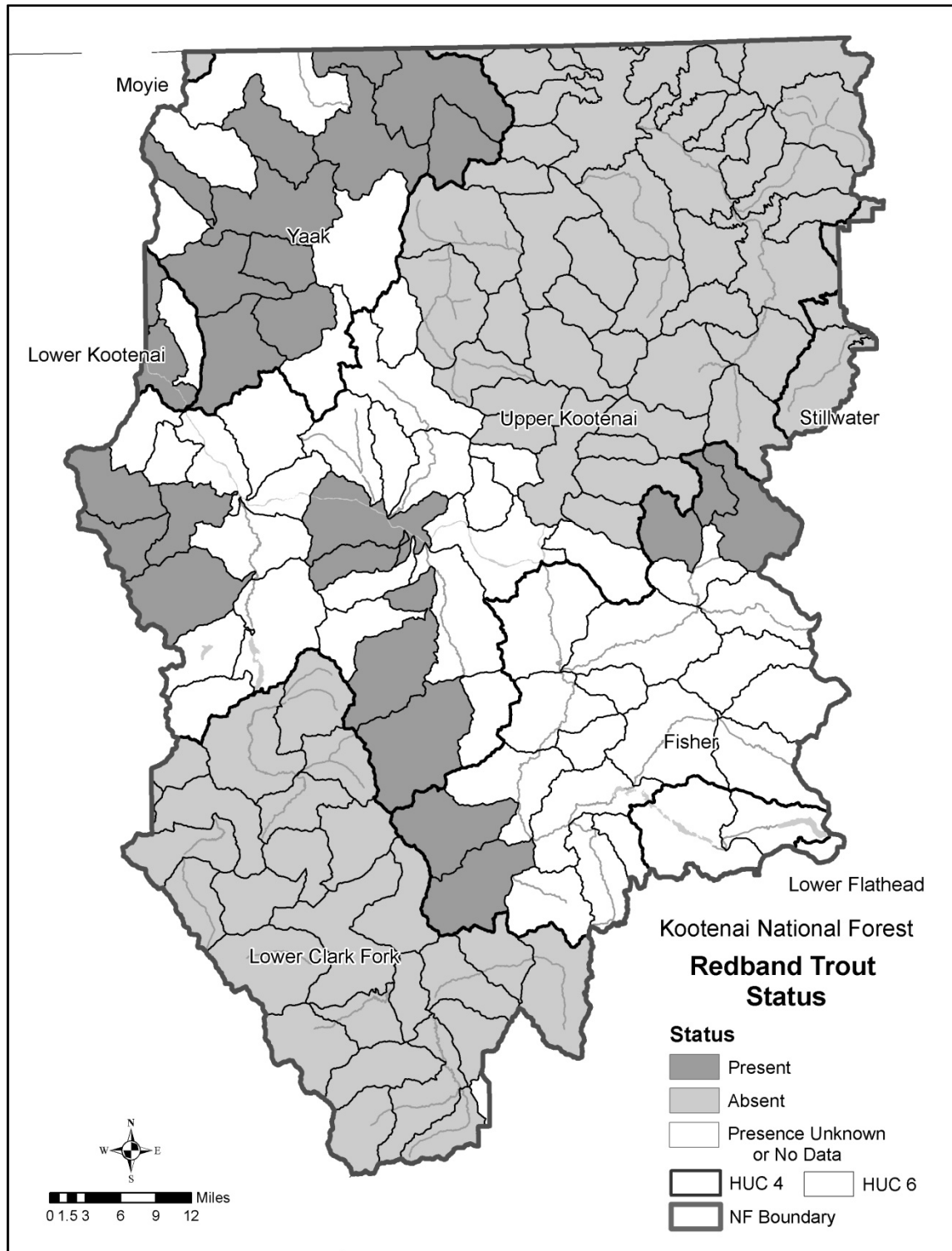


Figure 28. Currently known Interior Redband Trout Distribution

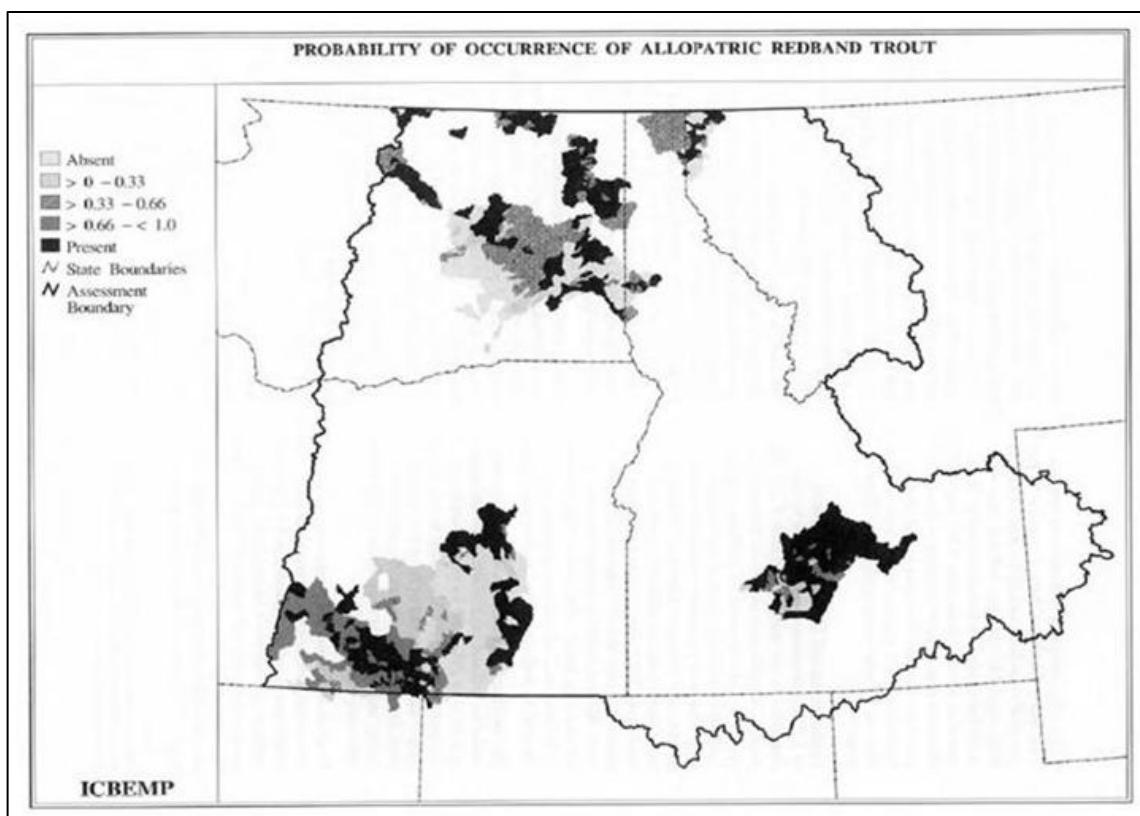


Figure 29. Probable Interior Redband Trout Distribution (from Lee et al. 1997)

#### **Kootenai River White Sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*) (Endangered)**

This species is restricted to the Kootenai River. These fish have not successfully spawned in recent years due to changes in river flow dynamics resulting from operations of the Libby Dam. Past land management activities conducted by the Forest Service, such as road construction and timber harvest, are considered a secondary impact to populations of this species (Lee et al. 1997).

#### *Status of the Species*

The Kootenai River white sturgeon was listed as an endangered species in 1994 (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 1994 September). The recovery plan for the Kootenai River population of the white sturgeon was completed in 1999 (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 1999b).

Critical habitat has been designated for Kootenai River white sturgeon; however, none was designated on the KNF.

#### *Distribution*

The white sturgeon is an ancient fish that inhabits large rivers, lakes, and marine environments from southern California to Cook Inlet of Alaska. It is a migratory species reaching lengths nearly 20 feet, weights of 1,970 pounds, and ages of 100 years or more. The Kootenai River white sturgeon exhibits both the riverine and adfluvial life histories.

The Kootenai River white sturgeon is restricted to 168 miles of the Kootenai River from Cora Linn Dam, Canada, upstream to Kootenai Falls, Montana. The white sturgeon is native to the

Kootenai River drainage of Montana, Idaho, and British Columbia (Brown 1971), and has been geographically isolated from the lower Columbia River stocks by Bonnington Falls (Cora Linn Dam), near Nelson, British Columbia. White sturgeon migrate freely throughout the Kootenai River (Andrusak 1980), but are uncommon upstream of Bonners Ferry, Idaho (Graham 1981, Apperson 1992). There are no published reports of sturgeon using lateral tributaries in Idaho or Montana (Partridge 1983). The majority of adult fish resides in Kootenay Lake, and makes extended (> 100 km) migrations to spawn in a 19 km stretch below Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Some adult fish remain in the river and overwinter in the deep (> 30 m) pools.

The KNF contains watersheds which drain into the Kootenai River. In the 1994 Final Listing Rule the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a biological opinion stating that the Libby Dam, completed in 1974, is the primary factor affecting the Kootenai River white sturgeon (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 1994). There has been an almost complete lack of recruitment of juveniles into the population since 1974, soon after Libby Dam began operation (Partridge 1983, Apperson 1992). Forest management activities have not been identified as a factor in the decline of the Kootenai River white sturgeon (USDI, Fish and Wildlife Service 1994). It is highly unlikely that forest management activities affect the mainstem Kootenai River or the Kootenai River white sturgeon population; therefore, this species does not have species-specific requirements beyond those of the Cold Water Group in the development of plan components.

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Kootenai River white sturgeon requires rocky substrates (boulder and cobble) and high water velocities (three to seven ft/sec) for spawning. These appear to be the two most critical spawning elements. White sturgeon spawn during spring peak flows when velocities are high and turbidity is elevated. The fertilized eggs sink to the bottom and then hatch within a few weeks. The newly hatched sac-fry briefly drift with the current before retreating into the substrate for up to a month. The juveniles eventually emerge from the substrate and begin a free-roaming life. Juvenile fish use a wide range of depths and water velocities as habitat.

Older white sturgeon is relatively sedentary in the deepest locations of the Kootenai River drainage, often selecting low velocity waters greater than twenty feet deep. Kootenai River white sturgeon is typically found over sand substrates. There are very few areas within the lower Kootenai River that contain substrates greater in size than sand. Due to the dominance of the small diameter substrates it is not known whether these fish are selecting for sand or are forced to use it. White sturgeon are opportunistic feeders and subsist on insects, clams, snails, plant material, and fish (Brown 1971).

#### **Western Toad (*Bufo boreas*) (Sensitive)**

This species is in widespread decline throughout its range. Past land management activities, (timber harvest and road construction) in and around streams and wetlands, have likely resulted in habitat loss. Because of the species' specific habitat association, and the number of unoccupied historical sites, it is possible that populations have declined or even been extirpated locally. Migration barriers, especially roads, have isolated habitats probably impacting reproduction and/or winter survival. Mortality at roads may be high near breeding ponds that are near roads with large amounts of vehicle traffic.

Western toad ecology, biology, habitat use, status, and conservation are described and summarized in Maxell et al. (2009) and Reichel and Flath (1995).

### *Status of the Species*

The western toad is currently recognized as two subspecies with *Bufo boreas* currently recognized as occurring in Montana. However, mitochondrial DNA analysis indicates that four main phylogenetic groups exist and each may warrant recognition as separate species (Maxell et al. 2009).

Globally, western toads are classified as G4 (apparently secure) and nationally as N4 (apparently secure) in both the U.S. and Canada. Throughout the states in which it occurs, its rank varies widely from S1 (at high risk) to S4 (uncommon but not rare and usually widespread). It is ranked as S2 in Montana. The western toad is a Forest Service Northern Region sensitive species.

### *Distribution*

This species occurs along the Pacific coast of North America from southern Alaska to Baja California, and ranges eastward to the Rocky Mountains of west central Alberta, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and (formerly) northern New Mexico (NatureServe 2011b). In Montana, the western toad is found throughout the mountains and intermountain valleys of the western third of the state on both sides of the Continental Divide. They are considered fairly common and well distributed throughout their range in Montana as well as on the Forest.

### *Population Sizes and Trends*

The total adult population size is unknown, but likely exceeds 100,000 (IUCN 2011). Within the last 25 years, populations of western toads have undergone crashes in Colorado, Utah, southeast Wyoming, and New Mexico (Corn et al. 1997, Loeffler 1998). *Bufo boreas* is now listed as endangered by the state of Colorado and considered a candidate species, which is warranted but precluded for federal listing by the USFWS in the southern Rocky Mountains. Surveys in the late 1990s revealed that toads were absent from a large number of their historic localities in the northern Rocky Mountains and that although they were still widespread across the landscape they occupied an extremely small proportion of suitable habitat (less than 10 percent in most cases, but usually less than 5 percent) (Reichel and Flath 1995, Reichel 1996, Hendricks and Reichel 1996, Werner and Reichel 1996, Reichel 1997, Maxell et al. 2009). Overall population trend is considered to be decreasing (IUCN 2011).

Population sizes or trends are unknown for Montana (Maxell et al. 2009). The boreal toad was considered the most abundant amphibian of the western third of Montana in previous decades (Maxell et al. 2003) and is still encountered widely and frequently but not commonly, and is no longer ranked as the most abundant amphibian. Numerous surveys since the early 1990s indicate this species has experienced regional population declines in the state. The population size is unknown and direct measures of population trend on the Forest are not available. However, surveys conducted between 1993 and 1995 located 63 adults. Of the 134 wetland sites surveyed during the 1993 and 1994 field seasons, 10 had evidence of successful breeding and five additional sites were confirmed during the 1995 field season (Werner and Reichel 1996).

### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Habitats used by western toads in Montana are similar to those reported for other regions and range from low-elevation beaver ponds, reservoirs, streams, marshes, lake shores, potholes, wet meadows, and marshes to high-elevation ponds, fens, and tarns at or near tree line. Normally, toads remain fairly close to ponds, lakes, reservoirs, and slow-moving rivers and streams during the day, but may range widely at night. Eggs and larvae develop in still, shallow areas of ponds,

lakes, or reservoirs or in pools of slow-moving streams, often where there is sparse emergent vegetation. Boreal toads are known to migrate between aquatic breeding and terrestrial non-breeding habitats. Adult and juvenile western toads dig burrows in loose soil, use burrows of small mammals, or occupy shallow shelters under logs or rocks. At least some toads overwinter in terrestrial burrows or cavities, apparently where conditions prevent freezing (MNHP and MFWP 2005b).

### **Coeur d'Alene Salamander (*Plethodon idahoensis*) (Sensitive)**

This species is endemic to northern Idaho, northwest Montana, northeast Washington, and southern British Columbia. Past land management activities, such as timber harvest and road construction in and near streams, have likely resulted in some level of habitat loss. Because of the species' specific habitat association, it is possible that populations have declined or even been extirpated locally.

Coeur d'Alene salamander population biology, ecology, habitat description, and relationships identified by research are described in Cassirer et al. (1994), Groves et al. (1996), and Maxell et al. (2009).

#### *Status of the Species*

Globally the Coeur d'Alene salamander is classified as G4 (apparently secure) and nationally as N3 (at moderate risk) in both the U.S. and Canada. It is ranked as S2 in Montana (NatureServe 2011a). The Coeur d'Alene salamander is a Forest Service Northern Region sensitive species.

#### *Distribution*

The species maintains a disjunctive distribution in northern Idaho, western Montana, and southeastern BC (Wilson et al. 1997, NatureServe 2011a). The majority of the species range is found on the KNF and IPNF. This species is a remnant of a once diverse plethodontid salamander fauna in the central Rocky Mountains that was likely reduced by climatic changes over the last 10 to 14 million years (Tihen and Wake 1981). Most known U.S. sites (87 percent) occur on lands administered by the Forest Service, but this data is biased by the fact that most surveys have been conducted on NFS lands (Ibid).

#### *Population Sizes and Trends*

Overall, the global population trend is unknown. The total number of adults is also unknown but probably exceeds 10,000 (NatureServe 2011a). Population declines or extinctions have not yet been documented in Montana; however, some populations continue to be vulnerable to highway construction. Most populations occur at elevations and in forest types where timber harvest is a common activity. Population sizes are difficult to measure and no estimates are available (i.e., surveys are generally conducted at night, when salamanders are active (MNHP and MFWP 2008).

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Montana populations of Coeur d'Alene salamanders are found primarily in talus areas along splash zones of creeks, or with seeps running through (Maxell et al. 2009). Nearby habitats are typically forested (Reichel and Flath 1995). Foraging areas include seepage areas and splash zones with high humidity, high substrate moisture, and relatively high temperatures. Shelter is provided by deep bedrock fractures or in talus habitat (Wilson and Larsen 1988).

This species is an invertivore. When above ground, Coeur d'Alene salamanders feed primarily on insects and other invertebrates including millipedes, mites, spiders, harvestmen, snails, and segmented worms (Wilson and Larsen 1988). They appear to be opportunistic feeders and generally restrict foraging activities to moist spray zones, seeps, or streamside rocks and vegetation, although they may venture beyond these areas during rainy periods. The diet is most similar to other salamanders that occupy semi-aquatic habitats (MNHP and MFWP 2008).

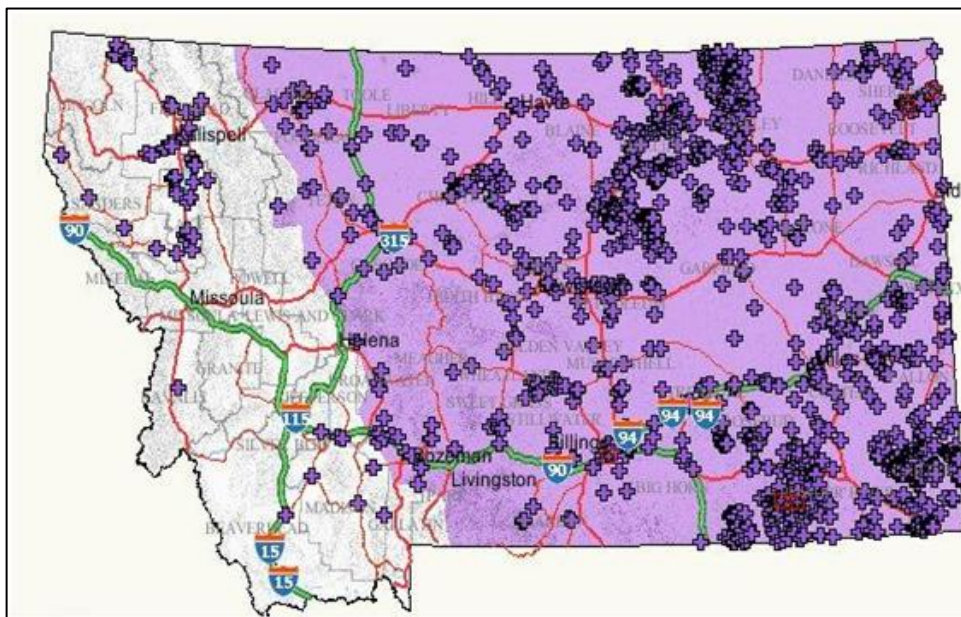
#### **Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*) (Sensitive)**

Globally the northern leopard frog is classified as G5 (secure) and nationally as N5 (secure) for both the U.S. and Canada (NatureServe 2011c). Throughout the states in which it occurs its rank varies widely from S1 (at high risk) to S5 (common, widespread, and abundant). It is ranked as S1S3 in Montana (NatureServe 2011c). It is listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Tier 1) in Montana and has been on the regional foresters list of sensitive species for a number of years.

#### *Status and Distribution*

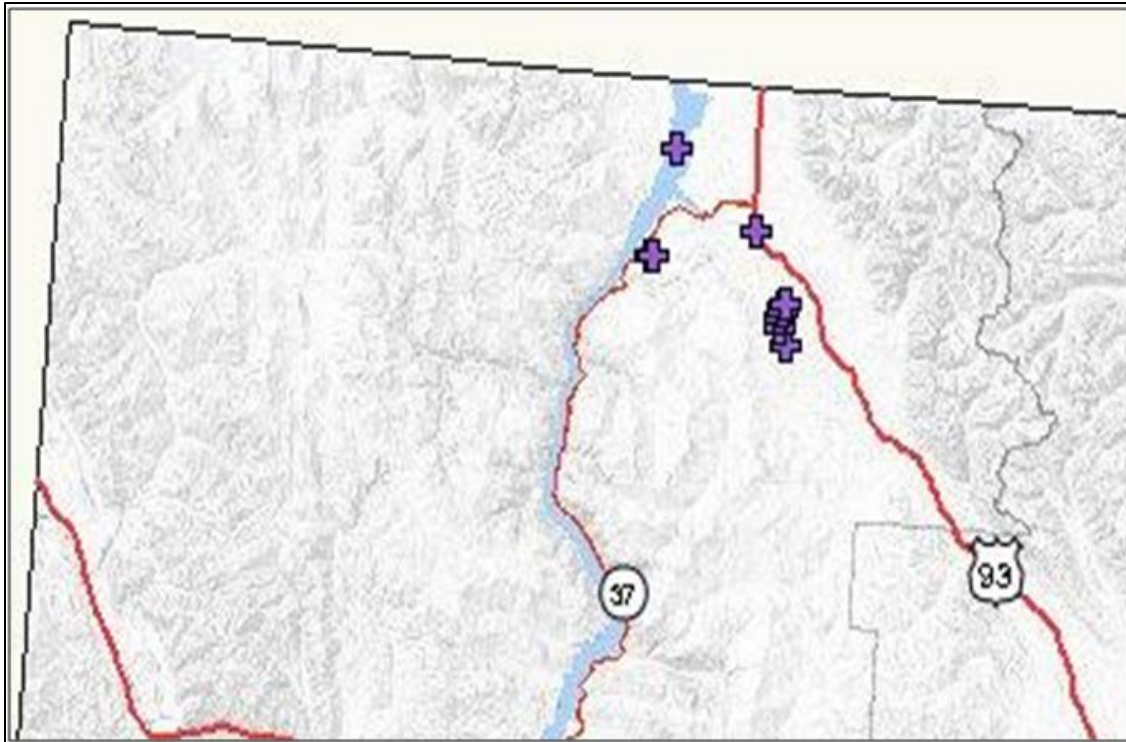
This species is known from Great Slave Lake and Hudson Bay, Canada, south to Kentucky and New Mexico. It has a spotty distribution in the west where it has been introduced in many localities (NatureServe 2011c). The northern leopard frog's historical distribution is irregular but includes western Montana except in the Big Hole area, as well as the tip of the Idaho Panhandle and southeast and parts of southwest Idaho (Stebbins 1985).

In Montana, the species range includes the eastern two-thirds of the state (figure 30); however, there are two disjunct populations that occur in the western portion of the state, including the Forest (figure 31). On the Forest northern leopard frogs are documented as occurring only in the Tobacco Valley area in several small populations.



**Figure 30. Distribution of Northern Leopard Frog in Montana**





**Figure 31. Disjunct Populations of Northern Leopard Frog in Western Montana**

#### *Population Sizes and Trends*

Overall population size is unknown, although in North America there are thousands of populations (NatureServe 2011c). The total adult population is probably in the hundreds of thousands or millions (Ibid). Over the last few decades, northern leopard frog populations have undergone declines and extinctions across much of the western portion of their range (Stebbins and Cohen 1995). Overall population trend is considered to be decreasing (globalamphibians.org 2008). It is still widespread and common in many areas, especially in lowland areas, but many other populations appear to have declined, especially in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana where the species no longer is extant in most localities where it historically occurred. It has nearly disappeared from the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem; is apparently extirpated from most of its historical range in Washington; has not been observed in recent years in the few historical localities in Oregon; and local extirpations have been reported for Alberta and British Columbia (Hammerson et al. 2004).

In central Montana, out of 47 historic sites revisited in the mid-1990s, northern leopard frogs were only found at nine (19 percent). Recent extirpations are reported in all of western Montana and across much of the neighboring states (Reichel and Flath 1995) (MNHP and MFWP 2005a). Most northern leopard frog populations in western Montana apparently became extinct sometime in the late 1970s or early 1980s when virtually no amphibian studies were being conducted in the state (Maxell 2000, page 142). Although historically known to occur in several locations on the Forest, most populations of northern leopard frog appear to have been extirpated (MNHP and MFWP 2005a). Only two population centers are now known to exist in western Montana, one of which is on the Forest in the Tobacco Valley (Werner and Reichel 1996, Maxell et al. 2009).



### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Habitats used by northern leopard frogs in Montana include low-elevation and valley bottom ponds, spillway ponds, beaver ponds, stock reservoirs, lakes, creeks, pools in intermittent streams, warm water springs, potholes, and marshes (Hammerson et al. 2004). Northern leopard frogs require a mosaic of habitats to meet annual requirements of all life stages. They occupy a variety of wetland habitats of relatively fresh water with moderate salinity, including springs, slow streams, marshes, bogs, ponds, canals, floodplains, beaver ponds, reservoirs, and lakes, usually in permanent water with rooted aquatic vegetation (MNHP and MFWP 2005a).

Adults and juveniles commonly feed in open or semi-open wet meadows and fields with shorter vegetation, usually near the margins of water bodies where there is permanent water and growth of cattails or other aquatic vegetation, yet they may forage far from water in damp meadows (Stebbins 1985). They seek cover underwater and seem to avoid denser vegetation (MNHP and MFWP 2005a).

### **Western Pearlshell (*Margaritifera falcata*) (Sensitive)**

#### *Status of the Species*

Western pearlshell is a state species of special concern in Montana (S2) and also included on the Region 1 Sensitive Species list (USDA Forest Service 2011b).

#### *Distribution*

Montana's populations of *M. falcata* may be significantly contracting and becoming less viable with stream-decreased flows, warming, and degradation. Previously reported mussel beds in the larger rivers (Blackfoot, Big Hole, Bitterroot, Clark Fork,) are extirpated from the drainage or are at such low densities that long-term viability is unlikely. This mussel species appears to have crossed the continental divide in Montana from west to east with its salmonid host, the westslope cutthroat trout, *Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*. This is the only native trout in the Missouri River headwaters. Reports of the eastern *M. margaritifera* in Montana are apparently due to the mistaken assumption that a mussel could not cross the continental divide (MNHP and MFWP 2011b).

### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Western pearlshell occurs in sand, gravel, and even among cobble and boulders in low to moderate gradient streams up to larger rivers. This species prefers stable gravel and pebble substrates in low-gradient trout streams and intermountain rivers. Western pearlshell is found in runs and riffles in stable main-current channel areas. This mussel is intolerant of silt and warm water temperatures (Stagliano et al. 2007).

In large river systems, *M. falcata* attains maximum density and age in river reaches where large boulders structurally stabilize cobbles and interstitial gravels. Boulders tend to prevent significant bed scour during major floods. Boulder-sheltered mussel beds, although rare, may be critical for population recruitment elsewhere within the river, especially after periodic flood scour of less protected mussel habitat. In localized areas, where canyon reaches are aggrading with sand and gravel, *M. falcata* is often replaced by *Gonidea angulata*.

Nearly all mussels require a host or hosts during the parasitic larval portion of their life cycle. Hosts are usually fish species, and hosts for *M. falcata* in Montana were typically and historically *Oncorhynchus* spp. (e.g., westslope cutthroat trout); but *Salmo* and *Salvelinus*

(introduced species) and even *Rhinichthys* and *Catostomus* (dace and suckers) are anticipated to be suitable hosts as well.

### **Macroinvertebrate Assemblage (Management Indicator Species (MIS))**

Macroinvertebrates are useful and convenient indicators of the ecological health of a waterbody or river. They are almost always present and are easy to sample and identify. Macroinvertebrates can be used to reveal pollution problems and are ideal bioindicators of water quality for several reasons: they live in the water for all or most of their life; stay in areas suitable for their survival; are easy to collect; differ in their tolerance to amount and types of pollution; are relatively easy to identify in a laboratory; often live for more than 1 year; have limited mobility; and are integrators of environmental condition. For example, the macroinvertebrate orders Ephemeroptera (mayflies), Plecoptera (stoneflies), and Trichoptera (caddisflies) are considered the three most pollution intolerant species found in freshwater streams and rivers. Because of this characteristic, a high percentage of these orders collected at a specific site typically indicate good water quality.

The PACFISH/INFISH Biological Opinion Implementation and Effectiveness Monitoring Team (PIBO monitoring crew), established by the Forest Service to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of that decision, collects and analyzes this type of data annually using accepted and peer reviewed methods. Macroinvertebrates are sampled using the protocol recommended by the Center for Monitoring and Assessment of Freshwater Ecosystems, Utah State University (Hawkins et al. 2003). Samples are analyzed and summarized by the BLM/USU National Aquatic Monitoring Center using 10 metrics (Karr and Chu 1997). One summary attribute was developed by the Center for Monitoring and Assessment of Freshwater Ecosystems in cooperation with the National Aquatic Monitoring Center that provides an index of biological condition for each reach. Specifically, the River Invertebrate Prediction and Classification System (RIVPACS) describes the similarity of the invertebrate species composition at a reach (observed) to the species composition predicted to occur at a reference site within similar environmental conditions (expected) (Archer et al. 2009).

As of 2010, there have been numerous macroinvertebrate sample locations (both repeated and single samples) across the KNF, with a sampling period beginning in 1998. An average RIVPACS score of 0.89 for managed sites indicates relatively high water quality and high quality aquatic habitat, as evidenced by the proportion of water quality indicator species present. A RIVPACS score below 0.68 is considered to significantly deviate from reference conditions.

## **Environmental Consequences**

### *Effects of Forestwide Direction*

#### **Alternative A — No-action Alternative**

##### *Watersheds, Soils, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat/Species*

Legacy effects from past timber harvest, mining, and other land management activities continue to affect watershed health and the aquatic ecosystem. As amended by the INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995a and b), the 1987 Forest Plan direction had reduced the risk to watersheds, soils, riparian, and aquatic resources from new and ongoing activities. For some resources, the standards and guidelines in the previous Plan contain general direction for repairing past damage, although it is lacking for other resources, such as timber harvest. Under the direction of the 1987 Forest Plan, the intensity and risks associated with new and ongoing land management

activities has been greatly reduced as compared to the last several decades. It is anticipated that vegetation treatments associated with timber production, vegetation restoration, and other projects harvesting timber will be lower over the past 20 to 25 years than historic levels.

Under the current Forest Plan, watershed, soil, riparian, and aquatic habitat conditions would continue to improve, as a reflection of the current trend in reductions of timber harvest activities and associated ground disturbance.

Soil conditions should reflect an ongoing reduction in harvest and disturbance levels and should improve in response to implementation of the Plan.

Management for riparian and aquatic habitat and species is based on direction outlined in the INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995a and b), which was amended to the Forest Plan in 1995; and was designed to provide protection but did not focus on restoration. It primarily provided direction for protection and passive restoration measures.

The PACFISH/INFISH Biological Opinion Implementation and Effectiveness Monitoring Team (PIBO monitoring crew) was established by the Forest Service in order to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of that decision on 21 Forest Service and seven BLM units within the Columbia River Basin, including the planning unit. Preliminary analysis of the first 3 years of data from repeated site visits across the Upper Columbia River basin suggests that land management strategies implemented for the protection of aquatic habitats may be meeting the intent of the 1998 Biological Opinion for bull trout, salmon, and steelhead. For complete PIBO summary information, visit the Forest Service Fish and Aquatic Ecology website.

Factors that may have contributed to a decrease in riparian area function include: improper livestock grazing, timber harvest, road construction, water diversions, and disturbances associated with recreational use. These types of management activities have altered riparian conditions by changing flow regimes, altering channel morphology, and changing plant communities. Natural disturbance in riparian areas may temporarily degrade conditions, but is also necessary for the regeneration of many native plant species. Riparian ecosystems are tied to the surface and groundwater hydrology, natural sediment supply, and disturbance regime of a particular landscape and many riparian plant species reproduce only after flood disturbances. Appropriate hydrologic and sediment regimes are important for maintaining the integrity of these ecosystems. Changes in the sediment load within stream channels may lead to down cutting or lateral erosion, altering floodplains and water table relationships. Riparian areas can often be key sites for invasion of exotic plant species due to the relatively higher level of human uses in these areas. Loss of native vegetation can disrupt the functioning of riparian areas because of decreases in root densities, which are important for stream channel stability and changes in plant communities.

Another potential indicator of riparian condition and effects to water quality and aquatic habitats is the number of road crossings within a subwatershed. Although all stream crossings are not created equally, higher numbers of stream crossings and density indicate the potential for negative effects to riparian areas, water quality, and aquatic habitats. Current management activities to improve water quality and aquatic habitats have included a reduction of the number crossings or improvement of their condition. It is presumed that this emphasis in stream crossing improvements would continue over the course of the next planning period.

*Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species*

As protection measures outlined in the 1995 INFISH Biological Opinion continue to be implemented, populations of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species will continue to remain stable or increase in population size and distribution.

*Management Indicator Species (MIS)*

Under Alternative A, it is anticipated that the level of diversity for the water quality indicator macroinvertebrate assemblage across the entire planning unit will be at least maintained, at current proportions (KNF River Invertebrate Prediction and Classification System score of at least 0.83).

**Alternatives B Modified, C, and D**

INFISH is forestwide direction that has been brought forward through all action alternatives (FW-STD-RIP-03); therefore, the effects from implementation of this strategy described under Alternative A are also common to all of the action alternatives. The additional direction under the revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines will further enhance conditions for macroinvertebrates, with an expected increase in the KNF RIVPACS score over what will occur under Alternative A.

*Watersheds, Soils, Riparian and Aquatic Habitats/Species*

Forestwide objectives, standards, and guidelines would protect watershed health and aquatic habitats for vegetation management activities. The construction of few new roads is anticipated; and existing roads will be routinely improved, upgraded, or removed as they are evaluated during planning efforts for individual management activities. Any miles of road construction will be greatly offset through miles of road decommissioning. The revised Forest Plan does not include any objectives specifically for road construction as it relates to soil and aquatic resource protection or restoration; however, the Plan does include an objective for 10 to 15 miles of road decommissioning or placing roads into intermittent storage as an annual average over a 5 year period (FW-OBJ-AR-03). Consequently, watershed conditions are not expected to decline from the current level of management in the Plan and are expected to improve.

**Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCAs):** INFISH provides for protection from some effects of timber harvest and prescribed fire on riparian and aquatic habitats through the implementation of RHCAs, which buffer streams from non-point source sediment generated by land management activities. Riparian conservation areas are zones typically associated with riparian vegetation and stream channels, for the protection of riparian vegetation, streambank stability, shading characteristics, and aquatic habitat. Riparian conservation areas contribute to maintaining the integrity of aquatic ecosystems by influencing the timing and delivery of sediment, organic matter, and woody debris to streams; providing root strength for channel stability; and providing shade and thermal regulations to streams. Because of the importance of riparian systems to the integrity of aquatic ecosystems that support aquatic habitat, appropriate delineation of RHCAs during project analysis and implementation is critical. Recent studies about the structure and dynamics of riparian zones have extended the scope of understanding about this landscape attribute and have important management implications for streams, riparian areas, and adjacent uplands (Spence et al. 1996, Quigley and Arbelbide 1997). Riparian conservation areas allow specialists to determine the level of analysis that best suits the needs of a project based on potential effects, baseline conditions, management direction, and issues. Riparian conservation areas define the type and levels of management actions that are suitable

within or adjacent to RHCAs. Riparian conservation areas establish a network of refugia that promotes the conservation of aquatic species while preserving and restoring riparian function and ecological processes. Riparian conservation areas will help to reduce the threats associated with the factors of decline in riparian condition and contribute to the comprehensive recovery and restoration strategy for listed fish species and their habitats.

Although RHCAs are currently applied during project planning and implementation, Alternatives B Modified, C, and D include more appropriate direction for future management and restoration of these areas. Proposed forestwide direction includes specific standards associated with RHCAs, such as FW-STD-RIP-01 and FW-STD-RIP-02 that require specialists to evaluate the function and condition of RHCAs during project level planning. Based on this information, specialists can determine the level of analysis required for riparian areas that best suits the needs of a project. The direction also defines the type and level of management actions that are suitable within or adjacent to RHCAs. The direction would ensure that RHCAs provide a network of refugia that promotes the conservation of aquatic species while preserving and restoring riparian function and ecological processes.

### *Conservation and Restoration Subwatersheds*

As described in the “Affected Environment” section of this document, subwatersheds were characterized as having conservation or restoration characteristics as a function of watershed condition ratings and status of native salmonid species. Conservation watersheds contain excellent habitat, water quality, and strong populations of native fish species. Restoration watersheds may have degraded habitat conditions, water quality limitations, depressed populations of native fish species, or a combination of the above, but have a relatively higher potential for improvement.

All the action alternatives include a forestwide desired condition that states “Conservation watersheds provide habitats that can support population strongholds of federally listed and sensitive species. Conditions in restoration subwatersheds improve to support population strongholds” (FW-DC-AQH-03). Based on desired conditions and language provided for in the definitions of these strategies, conservation and restoration subwatersheds would have a relatively higher priority for the protection or restoration of listed fish species, sensitive species, monitoring, future multi-scale analyses, and expansion and re-colonization of aquatic dependent species into habitats in adjacent subwatersheds.

These conservation and restoration areas should provide a level of protection and identify areas that have a relatively higher need for restoration of native species and water quality limited drainages. These areas serve to reduce the risks associated with factors of decline and contribute to the recovery and restoration of aquatic species, their habitats, water quality, and other aquatic resources. Land management in these priority subwatersheds is designed to complement other recovery/restoration plans and build on actions already taking place to recover species and improve the condition of water bodies that do not support designated beneficial uses.

Restoration activities implemented under the revised Forest Plan should be prioritized based on the presence and sensitivity of native fish species and subwatershed functional rating. This restoration prioritization approach formulates the template for recovery and restoration by applying the appropriate restoration approach (active or passive) and prioritization for subwatershed restoration to all subwatersheds within their respective subbasins across the Forest, thereby providing an efficient means to promote restoration activities and recovery of aquatic species and improvements in water quality and aquatic habitats. Watershed restoration is

designed to facilitate the recovery of watershed functions and related physical, biological, and chemical processes that promote recovery of riparian and aquatic ecosystem structure and function and benefit native aquatic species. Proposed watershed restoration in the revised Forest Plan includes both passive and active components to achieve aquatic and riparian desired conditions depending on the opportunities provided for in different MAs such as MA1b (recommended wilderness) and MA6 (general forest).

Active restoration is the direct manipulation of ecosystems to re-establish or facilitate the improvement of selected ecosystem processes. It is generally applied through the use of integrated treatments strategically located and implemented at the watershed scale. Active restoration relies on identifying and treating root causes that have contributed to the loss of aquatic ecosystem health. Treatments that address several ecosystem characteristics can influence the desired trajectory of conditions at a subwatershed scale. It may be impossible to achieve former (pre-human disturbance) conditions through restoration; however, it is desirable to restore ecosystem patterns and processes to support native species even if the best that can be achieved is a facsimile of a former condition. Selection of high priority restoration subwatersheds considers the extent of habitat degradation and the degree to which their natural diversity and ecological processes are retained. Active restoration activities consider and complement recovery plans for fish, other riparian dependent species, and water quality. Active restoration opportunities would be more prevalent in designated areas such as MA6 (general forest).

Passive restoration relies on the implementation of guidelines, other sources of design criteria (e.g., Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction), and BMPs to maintain watershed processes and aquatic habitat conditions and allow for natural rates of recovery. Because passive restoration primarily maintains current conditions, active restoration is often needed to move a degraded system toward recovery. Passive restoration opportunities would be more prevalent in MAs such as 1b and 1c that have wilderness characteristics.

To be successful at restoration it is important to have solid linkages to other plans (e.g., Montana State Wildlife Conservation Plans, Federal Recovery Plans, state water quality plans) and strong working relationships with other land owners and stakeholders. Watershed scale restoration is an interdisciplinary effort and necessitates close coordination between multiple resource programs, watershed councils, adjacent landowners, and other stakeholders and partners. Cooperation with land owners and interested parties such as watershed councils, state agencies, tribes, and conservation districts, can result in large benefits and returns on investments because mutual priorities and opportunities are identified and resources can be pooled to accomplish conservation and restoration actions. Direction in the revised Forest Plan that provides for this restoration component can be found in FW-DC-AQS-01, 03, and 04.

Active restoration opportunities will be pursued, whenever possible, and considered in the context of existing budget levels and other land management priorities. Revised Forest Plan direction will be applied to these priority areas and merit special consideration of their values during the planning and implementation of project level management actions.

As the revised Forest Plan is implemented, there is an anticipated shift in the amount of active restoration towards conservation condition as habitats improve and restoration components in the Plan move subwatersheds from a rating of “moderate” or “high” towards a rating of “low” and native species move in to those improved habitats.

Watershed, soil, riparian, and aquatic habitat conditions under Alternative B Modified are expected to improve more rapidly than under Alternative A or C, as a reflection of the current trend in reductions of timber harvest activities and associated ground disturbance, as well as proposed direction in the revised Forest Plan. For example, forestwide direction common to all action alternatives are designed to improve watershed condition (FW-OBJ-WTR-01 and 02); protect soil conditions, soil quality, and maintain soil productivity (FW-GDL-SOIL-01, 02, 03, 04, and 05) restore riparian and aquatic habitats (FW-STD-RIP-01, 02, and 03; and FW-OBJ-AQH-01, 02, and 03).

#### *Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species*

**Alternative B Modified:** Due to the protection and restoration measures outlined in the revised Forest Plan, it is anticipated that these species will show a more rapid improvement than under Alternative A or C. As an example, FW-DC-AQS-04 and 05 describe desired conditions for bull trout and objective FW-OBJ-AQS-01 seeks to improve the condition of subwatersheds with sensitive, threatened, or endangered aquatic species.

**Alternative C:** Populations of these species are anticipated to show improvements under Alternative C, but those improvements will be achieved more slowly than other alternatives as a result from more passive restoration opportunities in MA1b.

**Alternative D:** Populations of these species are anticipated to show improvements under Alternative D, and may be achieved more rapidly than other alternatives as a result from more potential for active restoration opportunities in land MA6 (general forest).

#### *Management Indicator Species (MIS)*

**Alternative B Modified:** The macroinvertebrate assemblage, used to indicate the condition of water quality and aquatic habitat conditions across the entire planning unit, is expected to improve. Measures in the revised Forest Plan that emphasize macroinvertebrates include direction such as FW-DC-AQS-01 and FW-OBJ-AQH-02.

**Alternative C:** Given the passive restoration nature of Alternative C, it is expected that the assemblage diversity will improve, but at a slightly slower rate than Alternative B Modified or D.

**Alternative D:** Given the active restoration nature of Alternative D, it is expected that the assemblage diversity will improve, but at a more rapid rate than Alternative C.

#### *Effects of Management Area Direction*

**MA1b:** Alternative C proposes more recommended wilderness (MA1b) and in order to retain the wilderness characteristics of those areas there would be an overall improvement to watershed, soil, riparian and aquatic habitat conditions. Although there are anticipated improvements, these benefits would be realized through more passive restoration activities and could actually be more slowly attained than Alternatives A, B Modified, or D, because of limited opportunities for active restoration.

**MA6:** Under Alternative D, there could be relatively more improvement in watershed, soil, riparian and aquatic habitats relative to Alternatives A, B Modified, or C. This interpretation is based on the fact that there is more land area allocated to MA6 (general forest), which increases the possibility of more land management activities; it does not preclude as much potential active restoration opportunities associated with those

activities as do the other alternatives. In other words, more activities are expected, allowing for more protection and restoration opportunities related to watersheds, soils, riparian and aquatic habitats and species.

*Consequences to Watersheds, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

**Effects from Roads**

*General Effects*

Roads have the potential to affect aquatic ecosystems and aquatic organisms through several direct and indirect pathways and to modify natural drainage patterns which often lead to accelerated erosion of road surfaces and associated cut and fill slopes. This can lead to increased sediment delivery to streams. Excess fine sediment can fill interstitial spaces in gravels and cobbles, which reduces available habitat for aquatic macroinvertebrates. In addition, this fine sediment reduces the quality of spawning gravels for salmonids and can ultimately reduce reproduction. Excess sediment can also reduce the quantity and quality of pool habitats. Roads can affect stream channels directly if they are located on active floodplains or directly adjacent to stream channels. For example, a road located adjacent to a stream can be a chronic source of sediment. If the road changes the morphological characteristics of the stream, this can set forth a chain reaction of channel adjustments that can result in accelerated bed and bank erosion, which produces excessive sediment.

Roads can result in changes in channel morphology, especially at road crossing locations. Poorly placed roads can encroach on stream channel and floodplain areas. Many older roads were constructed very close to stream channel areas, often in the floodplain. Often streams were straightened to accommodate road routing. Sometimes roads capture flow out of the channel and can result in stream re-routing down the road. Unpaved roads are the most common source of sediment to streams on NFS lands. Excessive sediment loading often leads to changes in channel morphology because of pool filling, widening of the channel, and making the channel shallower. These types of changes in channel morphology are reflected in changes in width to depth ratios, number of pools, pool depth, bank angle, and amount of undercut bank. Roads can permanently affect wetlands by interrupting natural flow paths and reducing vegetation. Roads can be a source of invasive weed species. Road crossing locations often create migration barriers to fish and other aquatic species, thereby fragmenting habitat.

Roads result in a form of semi-permanent vegetation removal. Roads in riparian areas create a loss of riparian vegetation which can influence the amount of solar radiation, water temperature regimes, and amount of wood available for recruitment into the stream ecosystem. Loss of riparian vegetation can influence the amount of solar radiation reaching a water body and increase water temperatures. These changes can ultimately lead to shifts in dissolved oxygen and pH. In addition, removal of riparian vegetation can increase nitrate levels which can increase the biological activity in water. Greater temperature fluctuations (diurnal and seasonal) can also occur when riparian vegetation is removed or decreased. The addition of nutrients in the stream ecosystem and reduced wood recruitment can affect the physical processes that create habitat complexity, such as deep pools and material available for hiding cover.

Road systems can change a natural hydrologic regime by altering natural flow patterns, particularly on hill slopes, thereby reducing infiltration and increasing surface runoff that may desynchronize flow regimes. Where a dense road network is well connected to the stream network, it can be an “extension” of the actual stream network. This can result in a more rapid



delivery of water to the mouth of a watershed during snow melts and storm events, which can increase peak flows. Wetlands may be easily dewatered by road intersections that increase drainage efficiency in those areas allowing for a conversion to upland plant communities or facilitate exotic plant invasion.

#### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

Recent activities have helped to improve soil and aquatic resource conditions through changes in road and travel management. Forest roads that are maintained on an annual basis are typically those roads that have the most administrative and visitor use. Roads that have been closed, or receive limited visitor use, or have been decommissioned have revegetated to some degree. During the last several years, many roads that are graded have had new surfacing such as gravel or oil to reduce the rate of road deterioration and subsequent erosion from road surfaces (INFISH RF-2 and RF-3). Several roads have been moved out of riparian areas or decommissioned. Culverts have been installed or removed at stream crossings that were contributing sediment directly to the aquatic ecosystem or impeding passage of aquatic organisms (INFISH RF-4 and RF-5). Although there have been improvements in the overall road network, roads and stream crossings will continue to provide affects to the soil and aquatic ecosystem. Maintenance, closure, and decommissioning of roads are expected to continue at similar levels or slightly decreased levels compared to more recent management.

#### *Alternatives B Modified, C, D*

Forestwide direction common to all action alternatives will lead toward improvement regarding the effects of roads on watersheds, soils, riparian, and aquatic habitat and species.

As described under “General Effects,” roads are a key contributor to watershed condition (see also appendix D). FW-OBJ-WTR 01 and 02, aim to remove or mitigate risk factors, which could include roads, to improve watersheds and water quality.

The desired condition for access includes a transportation system that has minimal impacts on watersheds, riparian areas, and aquatic species including threatened, endangered, and sensitive species (FW-DC-AR-07).

FS-OBJ-AQH-03 aims to reconnect fragmented habitat in streams to increase the distribution of aquatic and riparian associated species. Road crossings are a primary cause of habitat fragmentation; therefore, forestwide direction promotes reducing the effects of roads on fragmented habitat.

Regular road maintenance and decommissioning or placing roads into intermittent stored service is an access objective (FW-OBJ-AR-03). Project-level design criteria directs that roads that are decommissioned, or put into storage, be treated to make them hydrologically stable in order to avoid futures risks to watershed conditions (FW-GDL-WTR-02).

Opportunities for road construction are greatest under Alternative D as it contains the most acres of MA6 (general forest) and least under Alternative C, which contains the most acres of recommended wilderness (MA1b), and backcountry (MA5)<sup>1</sup>, which only allows for temporary road construction under limited circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> This MA allows temporary road construction based on the May 28, 2010 - Secretary's Memorandum 1042-155 - Authority to Approve Road Construction and Timber Harvesting in Certain Lands

## **Effects from Timber Harvest and Prescribed Fire**

### *General Effects*

Riparian vegetation removal influences channel morphology through increased potential sediment delivery to water bodies, reduced large wood recruitment, and subsequent changes in pool depth and complexity. Prescribed fire along streambanks and shorelines can result in variable amount and distribution of ground exposure, but these activities typically result in moderate, to light severity fires and have little influence on riparian vegetation and ground litter removal and subsequent surface erosion. Loss of riparian vegetation can influence the amount of solar radiation reaching a water body and increase water temperatures. Greater temperature fluctuations (diurnal and seasonal) can also occur when riparian vegetation is removed or decreased.

Timber harvest has the potential to cause accelerated erosion, primarily through construction of temporary roads and skid trails. Timber harvest can also affect flow regimes by reducing evapotranspiration, interception, and snow accumulation patterns and by increasing soil moisture and surface runoff. Use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives and prescribed fire can affect flow regimes by reducing evapotranspiration, interception, and snow accumulation patterns; and by increasing soil moisture and surface runoff. Timber harvest directly adjacent to wetlands can reduce shade, raise water temperatures, and reduce the potential for recruitment of woody material. In the short-term, 2 to 3 years, prescribed fire can reduce vegetation upstream and around wetlands. This can cause delivery of sediment and nutrients from burned areas, as well as recruitment of woody material. Prescribed fire can also reduce the evapotranspiration demands and make more water available for wetlands. Over the long-term, greater than 2 to 3 years, prescribed fire is expected to improve riparian condition, if applied to meet site-specific riparian management objectives.

### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

Timber harvest is prohibited in RHCAs except in specific situations, including when it can be used as a tool to improve riparian vegetation conditions (INFISH TM-1). Projects that use prescribed fire should be designed to improve riparian condition (INFISH FM-4).

A variety of timber harvest treatments; such as clearcut, partial cut, selection cut, and shelterwood have occurred in the past and most of those harvest units have been stocked, revegetated as a result of natural succession, or a combination of both. Historically, areas such as skid trails, temporary roads, and cutting units include riparian vegetation removal or were constructed close to stream channels. Localized sedimentation and temperature increases are likely to have occurred. Overall soil productivity and impacts to water quality and aquatic habitats may have occurred from past vegetation treatments, but natural recovery and improvements in present and future management techniques has mitigated or improved conditions of these resources.

### *Alternatives B Modified, C, D*

Forestwide direction for all action alternatives aspires to protect watersheds, soils, riparian, and aquatic habitat and species from detrimental effects due to timber harvest and prescribed fire. As restoration activities trend vegetation towards desired conditions, watershed health is expected to improve. FW-DC-WTR-02 emphasizes the protection of water quality during all management

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Administered by the Forest Service, and the June 18, 2010 - Secretary's Re-delegation of Authority for Certain Activities in Inventoried Roadless Areas.

activities. FW-STD-WTR-01 ensures that source water areas for public water supplies are protected from ground-disturbing activities, including timber harvest and prescribed fire.

Desired conditions for soils include maintaining soil productivity and hydrologic function (FW-DC-SOIL-01), as well as minimizing effects and recovering areas that have incurred detrimental disturbance (FW-DC-SOIL-03). Restoring soil productivity on these areas is a forestwide objective (FW-OBJ-SOIL-01). Project-level design criteria contain direction to protect soils during vegetation treatment, such as timber harvest and prescribed fire (FW-GDL-SOIL-01, 02, 03, 04, and 05). FW-GDL-VEG-09 protects peatlands from management activities that disturb soil, vegetation, above and below groundwater flows, and/or water chemistry. Such activities include timber harvest and prescribed fire.

Opportunities for more intensive types and amounts of timber harvest are greatest under Alternative D because it has the most acres in MA6 (General Forest), which allows for timber production (scheduled on a rotation basis). Alternative C is expected to have the least intensive timber harvest opportunities because it has the most MA1b (recommended wilderness, which does not allow timber harvest of any kind), and MA5 (backcountry, which only allows for limited timber harvest based on the May 28, 2010 - Secretary's Memorandum 1042-155 - Authority to Approve Road Construction and Timber Harvesting in Certain Lands Administered by the Forest Service, and the June 18, 2010 - Secretary's Re-delegation of Authority for Certain Activities in Inventoried Roadless Areas) combined. More effects to watersheds, soils, riparian, and aquatic resources are generally expected with more intensive timber harvest (Alternative D) and less effects in Alternative C, with effects from Alternative B Modified being in between. The forestwide direction common to all alternatives is in place to minimize these effects and protect these resources regardless of alternative.

There are no differences among action alternatives for prescribed fire opportunities because prescribed fire is an allowable activity in all MAs whose acres differ between alternatives.

### **Effects from Recreation**

#### *General Effects*

Permanent development and campground facilities in riparian areas can result in sediment increases to nearby streams, loss of stream bank vegetation, and reduced water infiltration. Associated human activities such as off-highway vehicle use on trails and stream bank trampling can also decrease ground cover and increased soil disturbances. Direct effects to channel morphology include the loss of pool volumes, habitat complexity, and decrease in the size of stream channel substrate. Recreation use (primarily ATV use) can cause soil compaction and loss of vegetation in wetlands and/or directly adjacent to them. This can reduce sub-surface water flow and increase surface runoff. Increases in surface runoff may contribute sediment to streams and associated aquatic habitats, depending on the proximity or connectedness to the hydrologic network. Facilities can be similar to roads in terms of potential effects. Facilities can permanently affect wetlands by interrupting natural flow paths and reducing vegetation.

#### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

Off-highway vehicles are a popular choice for outdoor recreation, but they do have the potential to affect soils and aquatic resources; particularly if unmanaged motor vehicle use (in the absence of snow covered ground conditions) is allowed. However, the KNF published motor vehicle use maps (MVUMs) in 2009 per 36 CFR 212, designating those roads, trails, and areas that are open to motor vehicle use. Motor vehicle use off designated roads and trails and outside designated

areas is prohibited by 36 CFR 261.13. Although past impacts from recreation trails and developed recreation sites have likely contributed to effects on soil and aquatic dependent resources, limiting motor vehicle use to designated routes and areas minimizes the potential for these effects.

In addition, INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995a) directs recreation facilities, including trails and dispersed sites, to be located in a way that avoids adverse effects on riparian and aquatic resources, including relocating or closing sites that degrade riparian and aquatic habitats (INFISH RM-1). This direction also includes adjusting recreation practices that adversely affect riparian and aquatic resources (INFISH RM-2).

As populations increase and recreation technology improves, motorized recreation use is anticipated to increase. However, site-specific planning for route designations and management following INFISH would continue to minimize adverse effects to soils and aquatic resources.

The Forest has also been managing over-snow vehicle access for several decades. The Forest currently has 258,000 acres closed to all motor vehicles for most or all of the winter months. These areas were closed because of critical winter range or because they are recommended wilderness or non-motorized recreation under the 1987 Forest Plan. No issues have been identified to indicate an impact to watersheds or soils from over-snow vehicle use. In the action alternatives, additional acres would be closed to over-snow use in recommended wilderness and RNAs.

#### *Alternatives B Modified, C, D*

The protections from INFISH and managing a designated motor vehicle route system described under Alternative A are also common to all action alternatives.

The objective common to all action alternatives for dispersed recreation sites will benefit riparian and aquatic resources by improving conditions through interpretation and education, by implementing human waste management techniques, and by physically improving sites at heavily used areas near water on the KNF (FW-OBJ-AR-01). Desired conditions for access and recreation include completing and implementing motor vehicle use designations (FW-DC-AR-08), which will meet INFISH RM-2 by moving off-road vehicle use away from riparian and aquatic resources.

Current management and future trends in recreation management are likely to include relocation of trails and developed sites away from streams and riparian areas in order to meet the intent of the revised Forest Plan to protect water quality and aquatic habitats.

### **Effects from Mining**

#### *General Effects*

Mining directly adjacent to wetlands, or within streams or floodplains that are connected to wetlands, can reduce water availability/flow and increase sedimentation and/or pollution. Mining of the stream channel causes direct increases of sediment. As equipment dredges stream channels, water flow immediately transports material downstream. In addition, placer mining can cause bank erosion from equipment use and loss of riparian vegetation. Loss of riparian vegetation through mining activities can influence the amount of solar radiation and water temperature regimes. These changes can ultimately lead to shifts in dissolved oxygen and pH. In addition, removal of riparian vegetation can increase nitrate levels that can increase the biological production in water.

There is one large-scale underground mine in operation on the Forest and two underground mines in the planning phase. These mines undergo site-specific NEPA to determine effects and required mitigation. The Troy mine is an underground silver and copper mine and has been in operation for many years. A reclamation plan is currently under development. The Rock Creek and the Montanore mines are proposed underground copper and silver mines. These proposed mines are undergoing site-specific NEPA analysis. The effect of these mines on watersheds is being determined at the project level. The Forest Plan provides direction that will protect watersheds and the water resources.

#### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

INFISH contains several standards and guidelines for minimizing effects of mining on riparian and aquatic resources (INFISH MM-1-6).

#### *Alternatives B Modified, C, D*

INFISH contains several standards and guidelines for minimizing effects of mining on riparian and aquatic resources (INFISH MM-1-6).

### **Effects from Dams and Diversions**

#### *General Effects*

Dams and diversions can change the streamflow regimes, alter sediment transport through aquatic ecosystems, and affect water chemistry. Water released from the bottom of a reservoir is often much colder than natural streams and contains high concentrations of nutrients. Diversions can create changes in water chemistry by altering the temperature regime. Usually, smaller volumes of water tend to heat up faster than larger volumes. Higher water temperatures result in increased biological activity and decreased dissolved oxygen. These changes can often result in a different composition of aquatic biota downstream of a dam. Types of changes are a function of how a particular dam is operated to achieve power generation and flood control goals. If a dam is operated for power generation, flows often fluctuate on a daily basis (ramping) for peak power demand. Annual floods are often “buffered” by dams and their reservoirs, resulting in smaller annual floods. Diversions change flow regimes simply by making less water available, particularly during the summer months. Dams interrupt sediment transport in streams and rivers, and can change availability of sediment in two ways: (1) Immediately downstream of dams there is a deficiency of sediment which can cause channel degradation and accelerated bank erosion. These effects are variable and can be seen several miles downstream of a dam. (2) Dams also can cause channels to aggrade or “fill with sediment” because they reduce the frequency and magnitude of floods. Removal of water from streams during a substantial part of the year reduces the volume of water (energy) available to transport the sediment load, and this can result in aggradations downstream of the structure. Dams and diversions often create barriers to migrating aquatic species.

#### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

INFISH direction for dams and diversions is included in standards and guidelines (INFISH LH-1, LH-2).

#### *Alternatives B Modified, C, D*

In addition to INFISH direction, forestwide direction common to all action alternatives includes desired conditions and objectives to protect or minimize effects from dams and diversions. Flow

conditions that fully support beneficial uses and meet the ecological and habitat needs of aquatic species and provide for natural water and sediment conveyance as well as overall channel maintenance are supported in the desired conditions (FW-DC-WTR-02 and 03; FW-DC-RIP-02). Connectivity between waterbodies to support migrating aquatic species is a desired condition (FW-DC-AQH-02) and is an objective (FW-OBJ-AQH-03). While most dams on the KNF are stressors that are not under Forest Service control, cooperation and coordination with state agencies, federal agencies, tribes, and other groups may be used where possible to achieve upward trends of aquatic species (FS-DC-AQS-03), such as through connection of habitat around dams and diversions. There are no differences among action alternatives for dams and diversions because their construction is an allowable activity in all MAs whose acres differ between alternatives.

### **Effects from Livestock Grazing**

#### *General Effects*

Livestock grazing near streams can result in changes in channel morphology (Belsky et al. 1999). Livestock trailing, chiseling, and general soil displacement along stream bank areas can result in collapse of undercut bank areas and an overall increase in bank angle, loss of bank cover, and stream widening along the entire stream reach. Over long periods of time grazing can lead to the entire channel becoming down-cut to the point that a gully forms and a new channel is formed at the bottom of the gully. This type and extent of down-cutting results in an entire channel type change. Livestock trampling and hoof chiseling along streambanks can increase ground exposure, surface erosion, and increased sedimentation. Concentrated livestock waste can cause eutrophication of lakes and ponds. Livestock grazing directly in wetlands or immediately adjacent to them can cause soil compaction, hummocking, and loss of vegetation. This ultimately inhibits sub-surface water flow.

Removal of riparian vegetation through livestock management can influence the amount of solar radiation and water temperature regimes. These changes can ultimately lead to shifts in dissolved oxygen and pH. In addition, removal of riparian vegetation can increase nitrate levels which can increase the biological production in water. Loss of riparian vegetation can influence the amount of solar radiation reaching a water body and increase water temperatures. Greater temperature fluctuations (diurnal and seasonal) can also occur when riparian vegetation is removed or decreased. Livestock grazing has the potential to cause increased sediment delivery through trampling of stream banks and by removal of riparian vegetation.

#### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

Livestock grazing is a minor component of management on the planning unit and would continue to occur across all MAs. Although livestock grazing is not a large management component on the Forest, there may be localized effects of past management. Livestock management has only slightly changed since the last planning period and livestock stocking rates are less than historical levels.

INFISH standards and guidelines that protect or minimize effects to riparian and aquatic resources from livestock grazing include modifying grazing practices, locating new facilities outside of RHCAs, relocating or closing facilities, and limiting livestock handling efforts (INFISH GM-1, 2, and 3).

### *Alternatives B Modified, C, D*

Opportunities for more grazing are higher under Alternative B Modified and D than Alternative C, because C has more acres of recommended wilderness (MA1b), which does not allow grazing. It is unlikely that grazing will increase under any alternative because of the lack of non-transitory range land on the KNF.

As allotment management plans are revised and incorporate forestwide direction common to all action alternatives (i.e., FW-GDL-RIP-02, and INFISH), these revisions will improve soil and water quality conditions within allotments for all action alternatives.

### **Effects from Fire Suppression**

#### *General Effects*

Long-term fire suppression causes forest successional processes to continue which can evapotranspiration and interception, potentially resulting in less water available for wetlands. In many cases, lack of fire can lead to the encroachment of woody species (primarily shrubs) into peatland habitats, which could lead to competitive exclusion of herbaceous species. Suppression of natural fire regimes causes fuel loads to accumulate. When wildfire does occur, the intensity and severity are often higher than they would be with more natural levels of fuel. This can result in higher rates of fuel consumption and availability of ash and nutrients that can be delivered to aquatic environments. Severe fires may also remove virtually all riparian vegetation and ground cover; and result in soil erosion and sedimentation to nearby water bodies and loss of important transitional habitats for aquatic species such as amphibians and insects. Suppression of natural fire regimes results in forests that have more trees and associated leaf area. This results in higher evapotranspiration and interception levels, which leaves decreased amounts of water available for surface and sub-surface flow. Lower levels of stream flow can affect the aquatic species as a result of warmer water temperatures and changes in water chemistry. In addition, fire suppression can allow fuels to accumulate above natural levels, which can cause wildfires to burn more severely. This process can change infiltration characteristics of the soil and change hydrologic characteristics. Fire suppression activities, such as retardant use and drafting water from streams, can also affect riparian and aquatic resources.

#### *Alternative A – No-action Alternative*

INFISH standards and guidelines contain direction on fuel treatment and fire suppression strategies (INFISH FM-1), locating fire suppression centers for incident activities outside of RHCAs (INFISH FM-2), avoiding delivery of chemical retardant to surface waters (INFISH FM-3), and immediately establishing emergency teams to rehabilitate areas significantly damaged by wildfire (INFISH FM-5).

### *Alternatives B Modified, C, D*

In addition to protections provided by INFISH direction, forestwide direction common to all action alternatives included guidelines to minimize effects to RHCAs from fires suppression activities through the implementation of minimum impact suppression tactics (FW-GDL-RIP-03); as well as to protect fish and aquatic organisms while drafting water by screening pumps and locating intakes away from spawning gravels (FW-GDL-RIP-04).

### **Cumulative Effects**

Soil-and aquatic-dependent resources are greatly influenced by all activities occurring within the Forest boundaries and can be a good indicator of large-scale cumulative effects. Nearly all

activities proposed in the revised Forest Plan have the potential to affect soil and aquatic-dependent resources. Of adverse effects, land management activities that disturb the soil surface have the greatest potential and risk. Risk increases with proximity or connectivity to the stream network and riparian habitats. Mitigation of the cumulative effects to soil-and aquatic-dependent resources is controlled through management direction provided for in the revised Forest Plan and through the use of BMPs and other watershed conservation practices at the project level. These practices will minimize the risk for ground-disturbing activities to have far reaching impacts to soil and aquatic resources by controlling the timing and location of these activities. Management activities on the Forest that may cumulatively affect water quality are: roads, vegetation management, recreation, livestock grazing, and mining.

The cumulative effect of these activities and uses will continue to be expressed by aquatic organism populations as a result of improvements in the quality of aquatic habitats. Fish populations and other aquatic-dependent species will be maintained and are likely to increase, within the Forest boundary, as stream and riparian conditions are improved through restoration activities (although stochastic events such as disease, climate changes, natural disturbances, or aquatic nuisance species will continue to have population effects beyond the control of management activities).

### Climate Change

Effects of climate change on watershed processes and aquatic ecosystems in the West, including western Montana, are described in detail in the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b). The paper concludes that the way to reduce impacts from climate change is to increase the resiliency of watersheds and forests to the changes in disturbance regimes that result from climate change. This synthesis suggests that the way to increase resiliency of watersheds is to maintain and restore watershed processes and aquatic ecosystems.

The following section is excerpted from the KIPZ Climate Change Report (USDA Forest Service 2010b).

Over the last 50 years, average spring snowpack (April 1 snow water equivalent) has declined and average snowmelt runoff is occurring earlier in the spring. These trends are observed for northwestern Montana, the entire Pacific Northwest, and much of the western U.S. Since the available data is limited to the last 50 years, it is not clear whether these trends are persistent long-term trends or reflect short-term decade-to-decade variability that may reverse in coming years. Several recent studies of the same trends across the entire western U.S. have concluded that natural variability explains some, but not all, of the west-wide trend in decreasing spring snowpack and earlier snowmelt runoff.

Potential changes in streamflow and rising stream temperatures are likely to increase risks to maintaining existing populations of native, cold-water aquatic species. Over the last century, most native fish and amphibians have declined in abundance and distribution throughout the western U.S., including northwest Montana. It is unknown whether, or to what degree, these changes are attributable to climate trends. Potential climate-induced trends of altered streamflow timing, lower summer flows, and increased water temperature will likely reduce the amount, quality, and distribution of habitat suitable for native trout and contribute to fragmentation of existing populations. Climate-related impacts are likely to add cumulatively to other stressors on native fish and amphibian species. Non-native trout and other aquatic species better adapted to warm water temperatures may increase in abundance and expand their existing ranges.



These climatic and hydrologic trends, combined with climate-related trends in wildfires and forest mortality from insects and diseases, can significantly affect aquatic ecosystems and species (Dunham et al. 2003, Casola et al. 2005, Dunham et al. 2007, Isaak et al. 2010). A growing body of literature has linked these hydrologic trends with impacts to aquatic ecosystems and species in western North America, often as a result of climate-related factors affecting stream temperatures and the distribution of thermally suitable habitat (Petersen and Kitchell 2001, Morrison et al. 2002, Bartholow 2005, Kaushal et al. 2010, Isaak et al. 2010). Lower summer streamflows and higher air temperatures, as observed over recent decades in northwestern Montana, are generally expected to result in increased stream temperatures. However, stream temperatures are controlled by a complex set of site-specific variables; including shading from riparian vegetation, wind velocity, relative humidity, geomorphic factors, groundwater inflow, and hyporheic flow (Caissie 2006).

Potential impacts to fish include:

- Egg incubation and fry emergence may be adversely affected due to flood flows, dewatering, and/or water temperatures. Shifts in the timing and magnitude of natural runoff will likely introduce new selection pressures that may cause changes in the most productive timing or areas for spawning.
- Spring/summer rearing may be adversely affected due to reduction in stream flow and higher water temperatures.
- Overwinter survival may be positively affected by higher winter water temperatures enabling fish to feed more actively, potentially increasing growth rates if sufficient food is available. If food is limited, the elevated metabolic demands could reduce winter growth and survival.

Bull trout is the native trout species most vulnerable to potential increases in stream temperatures because it has the coldest range of thermally suitable habitat among native salmonids in the Northern Rockies. For this species, increasing stream temperatures may cause a net loss of habitat because areas are not available further upstream to replace those that become unsuitably warm. For rainbow trout, which tolerates warmer stream temperatures better than bull trout and is often limited by upstream temperatures that are too cold, warming may only shift suitable habitats toward higher elevation stream reaches with little or no net change in total amount of thermally suitable habitat (Rieman and Isaak 2010). Cutthroat trout in high-elevation streams currently are commonly limited by low water temperatures and short growing seasons (Coleman and Fausch 2007, Harig and Fausch 2002). These populations may benefit from climate-induced increases in thermally-suitable habitat in higher elevation stream reaches (Rieman and Isaak 2010). However, warmer stream temperatures may also lead to nonnative fish and other aquatic species moving into previously unsuitable upstream areas where they will compete with native species (Rieman et al. 2007, Rahel and Olden 2008, Fausch et al. 2009, Haak et al. 2010).

Projected increases in air temperatures, along with projected decreases in summer stream flows, will likely lead to warmer stream temperatures in the Columbia River basin, particularly during summer low-flow periods (Casola et al. 2005). Recent scientific publications suggest that projected air temperature changes are likely to reduce the distribution of thermally-suitable natal habitat for bull trout, fragment existing populations, and increase risk of local extirpation (Rieman et al. 2007, Isaak et al. 2010). However, the risk of climate-induced extirpation in subbasins of northwestern Montana may be less than other, relatively drier and warmer subbasins in the Columbia River basin (Rieman et al. 2007).

Other recent publications conclude that westslope cutthroat trout, which can generally tolerate warmer stream temperatures than bull trout, is at a low risk for increasing summer stream temperatures in most basins within its range, including the Clark Fork and Kootenai basins of northwestern Montana (Haak et al. 2010). These studies also conclude that stream temperature impacts resulting from projected climate-change-induced increases in wildfire extent and severity posed a moderate or high risk of cutthroat trout extirpation in 46 percent of occupied subwatersheds throughout the species' occupied range. However, wildfire posed a moderate or high risk to cutthroat trout in only 3 percent of subwatersheds in the Coeur d'Alene and Kootenai basins, but 45 percent of subwatersheds in the Clark Fork Basin (Haak et al. 2010).

Kootenai River white sturgeon, spawn in May or June in water temperatures around 46.4-48.2°F and cease to spawn at 53.6°F (Paragamian et al. 2001). Under future scenarios of warming water temperatures and reduced summer flows, there is a possibility that the white sturgeon may be stimulated to spawn earlier than the May-June period. This may actually be advantageous for white sturgeon for both egg incubation/survival as well as flow/velocity requirements for successful recruitment (ISAB 2007).

Haak et al. (2010) conclude that risks to native trout resulting from projected increases in winter flood risk in north Idaho and northwestern Montana are greater than risks associated with climate-induced changes in wildfire, drought, or stream temperatures. They estimate that cutthroat trout in most subwatersheds in the Clark Fork and Kootenai basins face high to moderate risk of increased winter flooding (Haak et al. 2010).

### Effects Determination

Based on the analysis of all alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, other interrelated and interconnected activities, and the cumulative effects of other federal and non-federal activities within the Planning Area it has been determined that the implementation of the No Action Alternative or the other Action Alternatives would have **No Effect** on white Sturgeon or its designated critical habitat, May Affect and would **Likely Adversely Affect** bull trout and designated bull trout critical habitat.

Implementing any alternative including the No Action Alternative May Impact individual westslope cutthroat trout, interior redband trout, and western pearl shell but would not lead toward federal listing under the ESA. The analysis provided in this document represents the biological evaluation for the three aquatic species designated as sensitive on the KNF.

## *Terrestrial Wildlife*

This wildlife section of the FEIS is a condensed version of the extensive wildlife specialist's report in the project record. For additional information and analysis beyond what is covered in this section of the FEIS, please see the wildlife specialist's report.

### **Introduction**

The revised Forest Plan would improve or maintain habitat conditions for native wildlife, guide habitat restoration efforts, and provide for the long-term sustainability of habitats.

The KNF provides habitat for a great variety of wildlife. This includes almost 300 species of birds, from the calliope hummingbird to the bald eagle, and more than 50 species of mammals, from the little brown bat to the grizzly bear. Many of the species that exist today on the KNF were present before European settlement. The AMS Technical Report (2003) provides a list of species known to occur in the Forest. Using information gathered during the revision process, this species list was updated to reflect appropriate changes (additions, deletions, and modifications).

Past resource use and the exclusion of fire for almost 100 years has caused changes in some wildlife habitats. These changes have benefited some species and been detrimental to others. As documented in the Forest Plan revision analysis, defining and measuring the status of ecosystems now, and comparing them to desired future conditions, is the foundation for sustainability of ecosystems on the KNF. The vegetation features assessed as "key indicators" for the wildlife considered in the EIS are changes in forest composition, structure, and pattern in addition to security habitat (non-motorized areas). These features are very much related to the quality and quantity of wildlife habitats.

With more than 300 species on the KNF, it is impossible to track them all, so certain groups are carried forward in this EIS. Landbirds are of interest not only for wildlife viewing but also because of the international interest in conservation and the protection afforded them through the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186. Threatened and endangered species are considered because of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Northern Region sensitive species or their habitat found on the KNF is discussed in detail. These species can be used to help insure continued diversity and viability of species as required in NFMA and 36 CFR 219.19.

Threatened or endangered species for the KNF includes Canada lynx and grizzly bear. Canada lynx critical habitat occurs on the KNF. In 2011, the Region 1 Sensitive Species list was amended (USDA 2011a). Proposed terrestrial MIS for the KNF include Rocky Mountain elk, and a landbird assemblage of general insectivores (dusky flycatcher, olive-sided flycatcher, chipping sparrow, Hammond's flycatcher, and hairy woodpecker).

The revised Forest Plan would establish direction for various wildlife habitats in relation to type, amount, spatial pattern, and function. The Plan would also include direction for the protection, enhancement, and restoration of threatened and endangered species, sensitive species, and their habitats. The interdisciplinary team worked closely to integrate plan direction during the development of the revised Forest Plan components; in particular wildlife, vegetation, fire, and access/recreation.

Cooperation between the state of Montana and federal agencies is useful to ensure proper management of the fish and wildlife resources. The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation

Strategy Montana (MFWP 2005), as well as other state species management plans (e.g., elk, wolf, mule deer, and white-tailed deer) have been reviewed during the development of the revised Forest Plan.

## Legal and Administrative Framework

### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976:** The NFMA states that the Secretary shall “promulgate regulations,” under the principles of the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, to “provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives, and within the multiple-use objectives of a land management plan adopted pursuant to this section, provide, where appropriate to the degree practicable, for steps to be taken to preserve the diversity of tree species similar to that existing in the region controlled by the Plan” (P.L. 94-588, Sec. 5 (g)(3)(B)).
- **Sikes Act of 1960:** Forest Service policies recognize that state agencies and Indian tribes are responsible for the management of animals and assign national forests a role in cooperatively managing wildlife habitat.
- **The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918:** Addresses concerns for migratory birds. In a subsequent MOU 2001, with the USFWS, the Forest Service agreed to: (a) incorporate migratory bird habitat and population objectives and recommendations into the agency planning process in cooperation with other governments, state, federal agencies, and non-federal partners; (b) strive to protect, restore, enhance, and manage habitat of migratory birds, and prevent the further loss or degradation of remaining habitats on NFS lands.
- **The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended:** Provides requirements for federal agencies with regard to species listed under the act. Section 2 states that “. . . all federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered species and threatened species and shall utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of this act.” Section 5 directs the Secretary of Agriculture to “establish and implement a program to conserve fish, wildlife, and plants,” including federally listed species. Section 7 directs federal departments and agencies to ensure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitats.
- **Executive Order #13186 (January 10, 2001):** This EO, “Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds,” was issued by President Bill Clinton in furtherance of the purposes of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Acts, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. This order requires including effects of federal actions on migratory birds as part of the environmental analysis process. On January 17, 2001, the USDA Forest Service and the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding to complement the Executive Order.

### *Regulation and Policy*

- **Forest Service policy included within FSM 2670:** States that regional sensitive species will be identified and management taken to ensure that these species do not trend toward federal listing as a result of management actions.
- **The USDA policy:** For wildlife, fish, and plant habitat management in NFS lands is presented in Departmental Regulation 9500-4. This policy states that by means of the

planning process habitat goals will be established for plants and animals, including wildlife and fish species in demand for hunting, fishing, and trapping and those with special habitat needs. This regulation also directs the Forest Service to: (a) manage habitats for all existing native and desired nonnative plants, fish, and wildlife species in order to maintain at least viable populations of such species; (b) conduct activities and programs to assist in the identification and recovery of threatened and endangered plant and animal species; and (c) avoid actions which may cause a species to become threatened or endangered.

- **Additional requirements for wildlife were also identified and included in the 1982 Planning Procedures (36 CFR 219.19):** This section of the 1982 Planning Regulations states that fish and wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area. Management indicator species are selected under the 1982 Planning Regulations and objectives for the maintenance and improvement of habitat are established. Among other components of the 1982 Planning Regulations, there is direction to consult with biologists from other agencies, as well as consider the effects of pest and fire management on fish and wildlife populations.

### Key Indicators

- Changes in forest composition, structure, and pattern; and
- Security habitat (non-motorized areas).

### Analysis Area

In general, the analysis area for wildlife includes all lands managed by the KNF; however, for the purposes of this document it may include segments outside NFS boundaries. In some cases NFS lands may provide all or a high percentage of the habitat for a given species; however, in most instances, wildlife generally move from area to area and habitats on NFS lands may be important to a species survival. Cumulative effects analyses generally include lands within other ownerships immediately adjacent to the Forest, although for some wide-ranging species the analysis area may have been a little larger and included an evaluation of connectivity between larger areas of habitat (i.e., connectivity for grizzly bears between recovery zones).

In most cases, the temporal scale of analysis included the life of the revised Forest Plan. Some habitat analyses evaluated a longer timeframe. The ERG report (ERG 2012), for example, assessed habitat changes for the next five decades. Past actions were also considered as they play a role in determining the existing conditions and may interact cumulatively with the effects of the revised Forest Plan.

Please see the specific species' sections for more information regarding specific analyses. For example, the grizzly bear section explains the various measures used to quantify habitat (e.g., core area, open motorized route density, total motorized route density).

The revised Forest Plan would have fewer MAs (7) than the 1987 Plan (23); they would be much larger and would generally follow distinguishable features on the landscape. Management direction for wildlife habitats and species in the revised Forest Plan would be included in forestwide and management area desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines and are to be incorporated into all land management activities. Additional direction can be found at the geographic area level.

Providing for ecological diversity is an outcome of the revised Forest Plan. It starts with a comparison of the current abundance and condition of various habitats with ecological reference

conditions (historic range of variability) based on our knowledge of the past and on our understanding of ecological processes (e.g., fire, flooding, insects, and disease). This coarse filter approach to providing species viability is reflected in the vegetation desired conditions in the revised Forest Plan. The coarse filter approach forms the foundation of the analysis for each species. The report by ERG (2012) assessed the effects on selected species of moving towards the desired conditions for vegetation. It is important to note that ERG (2012) found that viability would be maintained for all the species analyzed in that report. The companion approach to ecosystem diversity (coarse filter) is the “fine filter” approach in which conservation strategies are used for individual species or groups of species to contribute to species diversity. The fine filter approach narrows the focus to those species that require habitat that may be outside the range of variation and are not covered under the coarse filter. In addition, there are species whose populations have been reduced to levels requiring special management considerations (i.e., some species listed as threatened, endangered, or sensitive). This fine filter approach is reflected in the specific direction in the wildlife sections of the revised Forest Plan. Each species’ assessment in this report evaluates the effects of the coarse filter, fine filter, and other components in the revised Forest Plan.

A disruption of natural processes (e.g., fire suppression) can impact diversity and lead to a departure from historic conditions (page 2-3 in CEQ 1993). The basic goal of biodiversity conservation is to maintain naturally occurring ecosystems, communities, and native species (page 5 in CEQ 1993). Maintaining or mimicking natural processes and naturally occurring structural diversity, promoting natural pattern and connectivity, restoring ecosystems, communities, and species, and protecting rare species or sensitive environments are all means to maintain biodiversity in an ecosystem (page 7 in CEQ 1993) and fit into the coarse filter/fine filter approach utilized in this Forest Plan revision process.

A variety of sources were used to determine historic and existing vegetation conditions on the KNF. The development of management recommendations for the revised Forest Plan to maintain or restore ecological communities was based on the historic range of variability and desired future condition (influenced by climate change) (see “Vegetation” section of the EIS). Movement toward the desired conditions for vegetation under the revised Forest Plan would provide for an array of ecological communities of sufficient size, structure, and distribution that is expected to maintain habitats for the vast majority of native species that occur on the Forest.

Population changes can occur when there is a change in habitat (e.g., canopy cover, patch size, tree dominance type). However, fluctuations in species populations will occur even when there has not been a change in habitat. These fluctuations may be due to climatic changes, disease, predation, excessive harvest, competition or displacement from exotic species, and other factors not related to habitat changes. For migratory species, a change in population may not represent changes in local forest habitat conditions. Many species migrate at different times of the year and are influenced by activities or conditions that occur outside the Forest.

### *Habitat Restoration*

One of the main outcomes of the direction in the revised Forest Plan is the restoration of habitat for native wildlife species. The revised Forest Plan provides more flexibility in the tools available to accomplish this habitat restoration in the long-term. This is particularly true with regard to fire and natural disturbance processes. Under the revised Forest Plan there is more emphasis and flexibility to use fire and natural disturbance processes to trend habitat towards the desired conditions for vegetation in the Plan. Those desired conditions are based on historic conditions and potential climate change, both of which consider natural disturbance. By allowing

natural disturbance to function nearer to historic conditions, then the approximate quantity, quality, and pattern of wildlife habitat across the Forest would be nearer to what our native species evolved with in this part of their range. By moving towards the conditions they evolved with, species viability would be maintained.

Active restoration through mechanical treatments can help in moving towards the desired conditions. However, given the predicted budgets, this tool would have limited success in trending habitat towards the desired conditions. The tool that has the best chance of success is fire and natural disturbance (both active and passive restoration). Natural disturbance has greater influence over the rate at which the Forest trends towards the desired conditions. Many of the MAs in the revised Forest Plan provide for greater emphasis on natural disturbance processes compared to the 1987 Forest Plan. In particular, MAs 1 and 5 would have natural disturbance processes as the primary means of trending habitat towards desired conditions.

Security habitat is also important to a variety of species on the Forest. Areas with lower levels of human presence, in particular motorized access, are important for providing areas of limited human disturbance of native wildlife. Again, this will most likely be provided by MAs 1 and 5.

Connectivity is an important component of wildlife habitat restoration and maintenance. By managing with a greater emphasis on natural disturbance processes, the revised Forest Plan would provide for the kinds and pattern of habitats, and therefore, connectivity that our native species evolved with on the Forest. Connectivity would be improved over the 1987 Forest Plan. Additionally, in order to maintain or improve connectivity between large areas of NFS lands, there is increased direction in the revised Forest Plan to plan and protect crossing structures across highways and other potential barriers, and to protect the surrounding areas in order to promote connectivity.

This restoration philosophy forms the foundation of the entire wildlife analysis that follows in this document. The revised Forest Plan provides the tools to accomplish this restoration and maintenance of wildlife habitat, and the result would be maintained or improved viability of our native wildlife.

### *Federally Listed Species*

Threatened, endangered, and proposed species are managed under the authority of the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (PL 93-205 as amended) which requires that federal agencies: 1) carry out programs for the conservation of listed species (Sec. 7(a)(1)) and 2) insure that any agency action is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species (Sec. 7(a)(2)).

Species listed under the ESA fall into one of four categories: threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate. The Forest Service has a legal requirement to maintain or improve habitat conditions for threatened, endangered, and proposed species under the ESA. Table 32 displays changes in federally listed species from the 1987 Forest Plan to current (2013).

**Table 32. Status of Federally Listed Species on the KNF**

Species Common Name	Species Scientific Name	Status 1987	Status 2013
Bald eagle <sup>1</sup>	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Endangered	Delisted
Canada lynx <sup>2</sup>	<i>Lynx Canadensis</i>	Not Listed	Threatened
Gray wolf <sup>1</sup>	<i>Canis lupus</i>	Endangered	Delisted

Species Common Name	Species Scientific Name	Status 1987	Status 2013
Grizzly bear	<i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i>	Threatened	Threatened
Peregrine falcon <sup>1</sup>	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Endangered	Delisted
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo luscus</i>	Not Listed	Proposed Threatened

A current species list was obtained, dated 08/15/2012, from the Montana Field Office's website (<http://www.fws.gov/montanafieldoffice/>)

<sup>1</sup> Analyzed under Sensitive Species section

<sup>2</sup> Canada Lynx Critical Habitat also present on the KNF

Recovery plans and biological opinions are developed for threatened and endangered species by the USFWS and provide goals and actions needed to recover species. Recovery plans are used as a reference document in identifying activities and steps that can be incorporated into forest management to promote the recovery of the species.

National forests are responsible for ensuring that any action funded, authorized, or carried out be done in a manner that does not jeopardize the continued existence of threatened and endangered species or adversely modify their critical habitat. This responsibility, under Section 7 of the ESA is fulfilled through the development of biological assessments that examine the proposed actions with respect to their potential for influencing threatened and endangered species or their habitat. If this objective analysis, conducted by qualified personnel, cannot clearly determine that the action will not affect threatened and endangered or their habitat, then consultation with the USFWS is initiated. Historically, the Forest has conducted frequent formal and informal consultations with the USFWS.

Management for threatened and endangered species will continue to use existing recovery plans and the most current scientific information available to aid in species recovery.

#### *Retained Decisions Related to Terrestrial Threatened and Endangered Species*

There are two previous decisions related to terrestrial threatened and endangered species that amended the 1987 Forest Plan and have been retained in this revised Forest Plan. The first was the 2007 Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD). The purpose of that decision was to incorporate management direction in land management plans that would conserve and promote the recovery of Canada lynx by reducing or eliminating adverse effects from land management activities on NFS lands while preserving the overall multiple-use direction of the plans. When the decision for the NRLMD was made, it was determined that it contributed to the conservation and recovery of lynx, and USFWS agreed. The direction found in the NRLMD is still valid and has been retained to provide the foundation for lynx habitat management under the revised Forest Plan. The retained NRLMD direction has been supplemented with additional direction in the revised Forest Plan relevant to lynx habitat management. The NRLMD has been extended to cover the life of the revised Forest Plan. The effects on critical habitat of managing the Forest under the NRLMD have been assessed as part of this forest plan revision process and the accompanying consultation with USFWS.

The second decision retained that is relevant for terrestrial threatened and endangered species management was the 2011 Forest Plan Amendments for Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (Access Amendment). The purpose of the Access Amendment was to amend the forest plans to include a set of motorized access and security standards that met the agency's responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act to conserve and contribute to recovery of grizzly bears. This decision is still valid and is based upon



the best available information for the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak recovery zones. The Access Amendment was retained and provides the foundation for grizzly bear security habitat management under the revised Forest Plan. The Access Amendment has been supplemented with additional direction in the revised Forest Plan relevant to grizzly bear habitat management.

## Summary of Effects Determinations

Table 33 summarizes the effects determinations for T&E species, as well as other species and habitats analyzed in this report.

**Table 33. Species Analyzed and the Effects Determinations for each Alternative**

Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed Species	Effects Determinations			
	Alt A	Alt B Mod	Alt C	Alt D
Canada Lynx - <i>Lynx canadensis</i> T	MALAA	MALAA	MALAA	MALAA
Canada Lynx – Critical Habitat	AA	AA	AA	AA
Grizzly Bear - <i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i> T	MALAA	MALAA	MALAA	MALAA
North American Wolverine – <i>Gulo gulo luscus</i> P	NLJ	NLJ	NLJ	NLJ
<b>Sensitive Species</b>				
American Peregrine Falcon- <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Bald Eagle – <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Bighorn Sheep - <i>Ovis canadensis</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Black-backed Woodpecker – <i>Picoides arcticus</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Common Loon – <i>Gavia immer</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Fisher – <i>Martes pennanti</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Flammulated Owl – <i>Otus flammeolus</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Gray Wolf – <i>Canis lupus</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Harlequin Duck – <i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Northern Bog Lemming – <i>Synaptomys borealis chapmani</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
Townsend's Big-eared Bat – <i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH	MIIH
<b>Management Indicator Species</b>				
Rocky Mountain Elk – <i>Cervus canadensis nelsoni</i>	MI	MI	MI	MI
Landbird Assemblage (insectivores)	MI	MI	MI	MI
<b>Other Species or Habitat Components</b>				
Migratory Birds	MI	MI	MI	MI
Big Game	MI	MI	MI	MI
Connectivity	MI	MI	MI	MI

AA - Adversely Affect

E - Endangered

LAA - Likely to Adversely Affect

MI - May Impact

MIIH - May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability

NLJ - Not Likely to jeopardize the continued existence

P - Proposed

T - Threatened

## Management Indicator Species

Table 34 summarizes the terrestrial management indicator species for the revised Forest Plan. More information can be found in the MIS section of this report and the KIPZ MIS selection documentation in the project record.

**Table 34. MIS for the Kootenai National Forest**

Species	Habitat Association	Indicator	Rationale for Selection
Rocky Mountain Elk	Forested stands (cover), and grasslands/shrub (forage)	Security Areas (acres and percent)	Elk are of high social importance and are sensitive to the availability of security habitat. Management activities that impact road use can alter security habitat. Monitoring of security habitat would be feasible through remote sensing (ex: travel route GIS layers)
Landbird Assemblage (insectivores)	Varies: open forest structures, mature forests, and snags	Varies: open forests/openings, burned forests, mature forests, snags	Moving towards the desired conditions for vegetation would restore or maintain habitat for some species of insectivores. The Forest will monitor movement towards the desired conditions for vegetation

## Old Growth, Pileated Woodpecker, Marten, and Northern Goshawk

The effect of the revised Forest Plan on old growth habitat is analyzed in the “Vegetation” section of the FEIS and vegetation specialist’s report. That analysis determined that the direction in the revised Forest Plan will retain existing old growth and develop additional old growth as the Plan is implemented. Therefore, old growth habitat will be retained for wildlife species that use that habitat, and additional habitat will be available in the future as this revised Forest Plan is implemented. There are no old growth obligate wildlife species that are solely dependent on this habitat on the Forest (page 12 in Castenada 2004), although there are species that utilize old growth habitats if available. See the “Old Growth” section in the vegetation specialist’s report and FEIS for more information regarding the effects of implementing the revised Forest Plan on old growth habitat. Additionally, old growth is discussed in the individual TES and MIS species sections in this report if that species can use old growth as habitat.

Pileated woodpecker, marten, and northern goshawk are not TES or MIS species for the Forest, nor are they solely dependent on old growth. ERG (2012) did do an analysis of the revised Forest Plan and whether implementation of the Plan would provide sufficient habitat for these three species. The conclusion was that sufficient habitat will be maintained, and that it was natural disturbance processes (e.g., fire, insects, and disease) that played a large role in determining the amount of habitat on the Forest. Please see the ERG report (ERG 2012) for more information regarding the impacts of the revised Forest Plan on habitat for these three species.

Goshawk, marten, and pileated woodpecker habitats were modeled by Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) in 2012 (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. Tables 35, 36, and 37 below display some of the relevant scenarios. The existing 1987 Forest Plan was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan into context. A warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes was considered. Scenarios also considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue

into the future and considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads.

The existing amount of goshawk habitat is below HRV and declines over the next five decades. The reason for the decline is natural disturbance which removes some habitat, but natural succession also adds some habitat over time, although not as much to compensate for the loss. Alternative B Modified results in more acres of goshawk habitat than the existing 1987 Forest Plan or the no treatment scenario, likely due to reductions in the amount of habitat lost to fire. As explained on page 97-98 in the Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) report (Ecosystem Research Group 2012), the results are very conservative. There is likely more habitat available to goshawks than shown in the analysis results because goshawk nest selection show they use stands that are smaller or more open than used in this analysis. Additionally, territoriality determines the population density of goshawks on the Forest, not the total amount of habitat available. Habitat is well distributed across the Forest, so territoriality would be the determining factor, not total habitat quantity. The alternatives result in a similar amount of goshawk habitat. Goshawks are not at a viability risk under the revised Forest Plan (page 98 in ERG 2012).

**Table 35. Acres of Goshawk Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified	1987 Forest Plan (acres)	No treatment Scenario (acres)
0	804,074	804,074	804,074
1	533,467	533,537	542,565
2	471,466	497,922	505,697
5	582,255	543,966	557,120

Source: Ecosystem Research Group 2012

Marten habitat was analyzed in two ways by ERG (Ecosystem Research Group 2012). First, they analyzed the amount of all marten habitat across the Forest, and secondly they analyzed the amount of only the mesic habitat across the Forest. Marten habitat is within HRV and remains so at the end of the next five decades. The mesic component of that habitat is currently within HRV but drops below HRV over the next five decades. The reason for the decline is increased wildfire over time that converts climax grand fir-redcedar cover types back to Douglas-fir or larch. Even with all marten habitat, wildfire, root disease, insects, forest growth, and succession are the driving factors determining the amount and pattern of marten habitat on the Forest. All alternatives have similar outcomes. Because all marten habitat remains within HRV, there is likely no viability risk (page 96 in Ecosystem Research Group 2012).

**Table 36. Acres of Marten Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified		1987 Forest Plan (acres)		No treatment Scenario (acres)	
	All Habitat	Mesic	All Habitat	Mesic	All Habitat	Mesic
0	964,849	354,050	964,849	354,050	964,849	354,050
1	711,622	189,306	703,393	207,103	714,147	218,973
2	641,946	126,227	617,645	141,440	625,828	156,321
5	762,059	80,930	686,341	90,690	692,551	91,072

Source: Ecosystem Research Group 2012

Pileated woodpecker habitat was analyzed by ERG (ERG 2012). The existing amount of pileated habitat is within HRV and remains that way at the end of the next five decades. The results of all the alternatives are fairly similar. As stated on page 99 of ERG (2012), "...the effects of scenarios are minute compared to inevitable changes over time from wildfire, root disease, insects, and in-growth." Based on the findings in ERG (2012), there does not appear to be any viability concern with pileated woodpeckers.

**Table 37. Acres of Pileated Woodpecker**

Decade	Alternative B Modified	1987 Forest Plan (acres)	No treatment Scenario (acres)
0	292,644	292,644	292,644
1	252,148	251,218	268,094
2	272,173	275,305	297,455
5	378,565	349,924	374,291

Source: Ecosystem Research Group 2012

For these species, as with wildlife on the Forest in general, it is wildfire, insects/disease, in-growth, and stand succession that largely determines the amount and pattern of habitat on the Forest for these species rather than management activities (pages ES-1 and ES-2 in ERG 2012).

### Organization of the Following Analysis

Each species is analyzed separately in the order listed in table 33 above. Each individual species section begins with an "Affected Environment" section. Within the affected environment is information on the habitat/life history needs and key stressors. The "Key Stressors" section is an important piece of the document and drives the effects analysis. The effects analysis looks at the direction in the revised Forest Plan in the form of goals, objectives, desired conditions, standards, and guidelines that impact the key stressors. It does not analyze direction in the Plan, or specific MAs or GAs, if they are not relevant to the key stressors or have some effect for the species. Stressors can be activities that have occurred in the past but may not be occurring presently, nor are they necessarily expected to occur in the future. These are simply activities that might impact lynx if not managed or mitigated. Stressors that are outside of Forest Service control include those activities that occur on non-NFS lands. Some, such as climate change, may have impacts on NFS lands but are not completely within the Forest's ability to stop or reduce all the impacts.

The "Environmental Consequences" section for each species is organized by "Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control" (this is a section that addresses the key stressors specifically and ties the effects sections in the wildlife specialist's report together) and "Cumulative Effects". The effects related to "Key Stressors under Forest Service Control" section have been grouped by related stressors/themes to streamline the analysis. Lastly, there is an "Effects Determination" section that lays out the rationale for the effects determination.

Information on current management can be found in the "Affected Environment" section, and also under the "Effects" section if that information is relevant for comparisons to the effects analysis of the alternatives.

## Changes between Draft and Final

Based on internal and public comments, feedback received during consultation with other agencies, new information, and updated analyses, several updates were made to the final wildlife specialist's report.

- Supplemented analyses: many of the species sections underwent clarification and were supplemented with additional information. The report by Ecosystems Research Group (ERG 2012), which analyzed habitat changes for selected species over the next 50 years under the revised Forest Plan, was also incorporated into the FEIS and wildlife specialist's report through citation and summarization of key sections of the ERG report. This augmented the viability analysis for selected species;
- Updated acres treated, acres open to motorized use, and MA acres;
- Alternative B Modified replaced Alternative B;
- A big game section was added in order to analyze effects to native ungulates that were not covered elsewhere in the analysis;
- Increased analysis related to the effects of over-snow motorized use. This includes a clarification of what would be closed to over-snow motorized use after the revised Forest Plan is finalized and what are the desired conditions that would be implemented through later site-specific analysis;
- Revised elk security analysis, FW-OBJ-WL-02, FW-GDL-WL-10, and the definition of elk security in the glossary;
- Updated T&E species sections to match the final biological assessment that was submitted to the USFWS between the DEIS and FEIS;
- Updated wolverine section to reflect the species being proposed for federal listing under the ESA and the threats identified by USFWS;
- The MIS section was updated and the KIPZ MIS selection documentation was finalized;
- Inclusion of a section disclosing effects of the revised Forest Plan on old growth, pileated woodpeckers, American marten, and northern goshawk;
- The wildlife forestwide desired conditions were rewritten to improve clarity while keeping the intent the same;
- Increased Geographic Area direction to provide wildlife connectivity;
- The forestwide wildlife objectives were adjusted to be realistic and achievable based on updated existing conditions; and
- Clarifications of the forestwide wildlife guidelines. The biggest change is to FW-WL-GDL-01, which in the draft covered a variety of species. This guideline is now specific to grizzly bears and the other species have been covered under a series of new guidelines or through editing of other existing guidelines.

## Threatened, Endangered, and Proposed Species

Two threatened species occur on the KNF: the Canada lynx and the grizzly bear. Critical habitat for lynx is also located on the KNF. One proposed species also occurs: the North American wolverine.

### *Canada Lynx — Lynx canadensis*

#### **Affected Environment**

Information on lynx biology and ecology can be found in; “Ecology and Conservation of Lynx in the United States” (often referred to as the Lynx Science report) by Ruggiero et al. (2000). In addition, a conservation strategy and management assessment of the current state of the knowledge on lynx habitat management was prepared by a group of federal interagency biologists (referred to as the Lynx Biology Team) and is entitled, “The Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy” (LCAS) (Ruediger et.al. 2000). The final lynx listing rule (Clark 2000) gives population and habitat status on a national scale. The USDA Forest Service (2007) developed the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD) which is based upon this strategy. This decision amends the forest plans by providing lynx habitat management objectives, standards, and guidelines. It is carried forward in all alternatives. The most recent lynx distinct population segment status is found in the biological opinion on the effects of the NRLMD (USDI 2007a). Additional information is located in the various references cited.

In general, the LAUs or critical habitat were used for the analysis boundaries, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., connectivity). The period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, the habitat analysis, such as the ERG analysis (ERG 2012), also looked at vegetation changes over the next 50 years.

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Lynx in the contiguous United States are at the southern limits of a widely distributed range across Canada and Alaska. Lynx and lynx habitat are most abundant in the classic boreal forest ecosystem known as taiga in Canada and Alaska. Lynx extend south from this into the conterminous United States in a peninsular fashion and inhabit areas that are considered more marginal. Lynx occur primarily in moist, cold habitat types above 4,000 feet in elevation, where snow depths are generally deep throughout the winter. The further south one moves, the less suitable and less abundant habitats become.

Lynx occur in mesic boreal forests that have cold, snowy winters and provide a prey base of snowshoe hares. Lynx usually use mature and late-successional forests where there are accumulations of down logs for denning (IDFG 2005, Koehler and Aubry 1994, and Ruggiero et al. 2000). Other key habitat features appear to be remote and secure habitats, and habitat connectivity (Claar et al. 2003, Koehler and Aubry 1994, Wisdom et al. 2000).

In the United States, lynx inhabit conifer and conifer-hardwood habitats that support their primary (snowshoe hare) and secondary prey. They are adapted for hunting snowshoe hares and other prey in the deep snow conditions of boreal forests (Koehler and Aubry 1994, Ruggiero et al. 2000, and USDI 2005).

Snowshoe hare is an important food source, comprising 35 to 97 percent of the diet throughout the range of lynx. In periods of low snowshoe hare densities, starvation can account for up to two-thirds of all natural lynx mortality. Other prey species include red squirrel, northern flying squirrel, grouse, marten, voles, and occasionally small birds. The primary limiting factor for this species appears to be suitable winter foraging habitat. Primary winter foraging habitat is found in multi-story mature or late-successional forests that hold good populations of snowshoe hare (Squires et al. 2006). Recent research in northwest Montana demonstrates that mature, multi-

storied forests provide important winter snowshoe hare habitat and are more important than younger stands (USDA 2007). Red squirrels may be an important prey species, especially when hare populations are low.

On the KNF, lynx primarily use multi-story stands in the spruce-fir types during winter as these contain a high amount of horizontal cover, and therefore, snowshoe hare habitat similar to that described in Squires et al. (2010). Lynx will also use other stand types during the year; and snowshoe hare appear to occur in an array of stands as long as they provide abundant horizontal cover. Stands with abundant horizontal cover are common in the area of the KNF where lynx and snowshoe hare are most abundant (north of Libby but west of Koocanusa and east of Pete Creek in the Yaak). Lynx rarely use, or are absent in, the Cabinets and West Cabinets. The reason is unknown, but it may be due to the topography being steeper or to unfavorable climatic conditions (snow conditions) (Squires, personal communication, September 6, 2012).

Summer foraging habitat (also good summer hare habitat) consists of early successional stages of dense, young (approximately 15 to 30-year old) forests. This short time-frame (about 15 years) does not last long on the landscape before growing into a structure that does not provide good foraging for lynx. A regular influx of early successional vegetation is important to maintain a level of summer foraging habitat through time. This can be created by any disturbance process, such as fire, windthrow, or vegetation management activities. Generally, maintaining no more than 30 percent of a lynx home range in early succession habitat is considered good for lynx management.

Denning habitat generally consists of mature stands of spruce-fir forests with high horizontal cover and abundant coarse woody debris (Squires et al. 2008). Lynx with kittens need well-distributed patches of denning habitat throughout their home range. Denning habitat is abundant on the KNF and is not limiting (Squires, personal communication, September 6, 2012).

Both timber harvest and natural disturbance processes, including fire, insect infestations, wind events, and tree disease outbreaks can provide foraging habitat when resulting in high understory tree stem densities and structure. These vegetation characteristics provide dense, multi-layered, horizontal vegetation cover that maximizes cover and browse for snowshoe hare at or above the ground, and the mean snow level throughout the winter (Koehler and Aubry 1994, Ruggiero et al. 2000, and USDI 2005).

Lynx habitat within the Northern Rockies Geographic Area has been delineated into smaller LAUs for analysis and management purposes. These LAUs are defined in Ruediger et al. (2000) as approximating the size of a lynx home range (25-50 mi<sup>2</sup>) and containing at least 10 mi<sup>2</sup> (6,400 acres) of primary vegetation capable of supporting lynx. Within each LAU, the NRLMD identifies certain measures to use in assessing the current vegetation condition of the LAU relative to sustaining a lynx home range. Approximately 67 percent of the KNF is within the LAUs (roughly 1,492,611 out of 2,219,100 acres).

The KNFs mapped LAUs have remained the same since the 2007 NRLMD.

Current management for lynx on the KNF is directed by the NRLMD, which amended the Forest Plan. The NRLMD determined that there would be long-term benefits or maintenance of lynx habitat, although some short-term adverse effects by implementing the direction in the NRLMD. The NRLMD contains direction related to vegetation, grazing, human uses, and linkage areas.

With regard to percentage of lynx habitat in the stand initiation structural stage, the NRLMD requires that no additional regeneration harvest is allowed if more than 30 percent of lynx habitat in an LAU is in a stand initiation structural stage that does not provide winter snowshoe hare habitat, except for fuel treatments in the wildland urban interface. On the KNF, none of the LAUs on the Forest exceed the 30 percent stand initiation structural stage (table 38).

Under the NRLMD, no more than 15 percent of lynx habitat on NFS lands in an LAU may be changed by regeneration harvest in a 10-year period. Percent is the percent of total LAU acres that provide lynx habitat. The Forest has regenerated less than 15 percent of any LAU over the past 10 years.

No LAU should have more than two adjacent LAUs that exceed 30 percent. There are no LAUs that have any adjacent LAUs that exceed 30 percent.



Table 38. Lynx Habitat and Critical Habitat by Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU) on the Kootenai National Forest (2010)

Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU)	Total Lynx Habitat in LAU on NFS Lands (Acres)	Total Lynx Habitat in LAU – all Ownerships <sup>4</sup> (Acres)	Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage Habitat on NFS Lands [Acres (% of NFS Lynx Habitat in LAU)]	Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage Habitat – all Ownerships [Acres (% of Lynx Habitat on all Ownerships in LAU)] <sup>1</sup>	Habitat Changed to Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage on NFS lands Over the Past 10 Years by Timber Management with Regeneration Harvests [Acres (%)] <sup>2</sup>	Number of Adjacent LAUs that Exceed 30 % Lynx Habitat in an Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage	Is the LAU within Critical Habitat (Y/N)? <sup>3</sup>
Young/Dodge	16,258	16,258	622 (4)	622 (4)	364 (2)	0	Y
Boulder/Sullivan	22,432	22,432	1,673 (8)	1,673 (8)	449 (2)	0	Y
Good	12,389	12,389	1,554 (12)	1,554 (12)	144 (1)	0	Y
North Fork Big	15,727	15,727	333 (2)	333 (2)	0 (0)	0	Y
Lookout	17,023	17,023	398 (2)	398 (2)	207 (1)	0	Y
South Fork Big	20,451	20,455	296 (1)	296 (1)	276 (1)	0	Y
Parsnip	14,248	14,248	568 (4)	568 (4)	491 (3)	0	Y
McGuire/Tenmile	20,145	20,145	599 (3)	599 (3)	504 (3)	0	Y
Sutton	16,092	16,092	1,988 (12)	1,988 (12)	626 (4)	0	Y
Pinkham	24,713	24,713	3,663 (15)	3,663 (15)	3,284 (13)	0	Y
Therriault	37,878	37,878	22 (<1)	22 (<1)	21 (<1)	0	Y
Grave	38,332	38,332	1,096 (3)	1,096 (3)	0 (0)	0	Y
Krinklehorn	10,809	10,809	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0	Y
Edna	14,628	14,632	265 (2)	265 (2)	265 (2)	0	Y
Swamp	19,628	19,629	77 (<1)	77 (<1)	77 (<1)	0	Y
Fortine	17,805	17,809	529 (3)	529 (3)	342 (2)	0	Y
Sunday/Trego	31,859	31,860	1,096 (3)	1,096 (3)	351 (1)	0	Y
Robinson	41,141	41,141	357 (1)	357 (1)	229 (1)	0	Y
Hawkins	47,572	47,572	402 (1)	402 (1)	109 (<1)	0	Y
Baldy	29,870	29,870	260 (1)	260 (1)	0 (0)	0	Y

Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU)	Total Lynx Habitat in LAU on NFS Lands (Acres)	Total Lynx Habitat in LAU – all Ownerships (Acres) <sup>4</sup>	Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage Habitat on NFS Lands [Acres (% of NFS Lynx Habitat in LAU)]	Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage Habitat – all Ownerships [Acres (% of Lynx Habitat on all Ownerships in LAU)] <sup>1</sup>	Habitat Changed to Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage on NFS lands Over the Past 10 Years by Timber Management with Regeneration Harvests [Acres (%)] <sup>2</sup>	Number of Adjacent LAUs that Exceed 30 % Lynx Habitat in an Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage	Is the LAU within Critical Habitat (Y/N)? <sup>3</sup>
Lost Horse	28,506	28,506	4,108 (14)	4,108 (14)	952 (3)	0	Y
Skookum	34,427	34,427	354 (1)	354 (1)	332 (1)	0	Y
Thunder	26,617	26,617	51 (<1)	51 (<1)	0 (0)	0	Y
China	23,000	23,000	1,653 (7)	1,653 (7)	0 (0)	0	Y
Callahan	34,409	34,409	372 (1)	372 (1)	0 (0)	0	N
Crowl	12,533	12,533	12 (<1)	12 (<1)	0 (0)	0	N
Keeler	13,433	13,433	62 (1)	62 (1)	163 (1)	0	N
Ross	22,734	23,124	45 (<1)	45 (<1)	45 (<1)	0	N
McElk	7,439	10,941	0 (0)	547 (5)	0 (0)	0	N
Silver Butte	19,248	19,973	33 (< 1)	33 (< 1)	0 (0)	0	N
West Fisher	12,247	12,601	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0	N
Crazy	22,557	22,728	81 (<1)	81 (<1)	0 (0)	0	N
Treasure	24,610	24,610	1,989 (8)	1,989 (8)	0 (0)	0	N
Lower Quartz	11,198	11,274	72 (1)	79 (1)	0 (0)	0	Y
Upper Quartz	15,651	15,698	73 (<1)	73 (<1)	0 (0)	0	Y
Upper Pipe	14,208	15,848	57 (<1)	126 (1)	0 (0)	0	Y
Lower Pipe	13,517	16,043	907 (7)	1,867 (12)	55 (<1)	0	Y
Bristow	16,429	16,699	1,150 (7)	1,150 (7)	540 (3)	0	Y
Cripple	28,676	30,461	1,005 (4)	1,233 (4)	450 (2)	0	Y
Dry Fork/Weigel	17,603	17,603	718 (4)	718 (4)	352 (2)	0	Y
Upper Wolf	12,438	15,379	1,689 (14)	2,692 (18)	369 (3)	0	Y
Bull	16,111	16,111	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0	N

Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU)	Total Lynx Habitat in LAU on NFS Lands (Acres)	Total Lynx Habitat in LAU – all Ownerships (Acres) <sup>4</sup>	Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage Habitat on NFS Lands [Acres (% of NFS Lynx Habitat in LAU)]	Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage Habitat – all Ownerships [Acres (% of Lynx Habitat on all Ownerships in LAU)] <sup>1</sup>	Habitat Changed to Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage on NFS lands Over the Past 10 Years by Timber Management with Regeneration Harvests [Acres (%)] <sup>2</sup>	Number of Adjacent LAUs that Exceed 30 % Lynx Habitat in an Early Stand Initiation Structural Stage	Is the LAU within Critical Habitat (Y/N)? <sup>3</sup>
Rock	22,511	22,558	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0	N
Vermilion	36,635	36,637	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0	N
Beaver/Whitepine	23,996	24,003	125 (<1)	125 (<1)	991 (4)	0	N
Trout/Martin	26,844	26,844	171 (1)	171 (1)	179 (1)	0	N
Elk/Pilgrim	18,340	18,340	160 (1)	160 (1)	284 (2)	0	N

The table shows the amount of lynx habitat in a stand initiation stage (i.e., early stand initiation stage) that does not currently provide winter snowshoe hare habitat

<sup>1</sup> These acres are lynx habitat that currently does not provide sufficient vegetation quantity or quality (height) to be used by snowshoe hare and lynx in winter. No additional regeneration harvest is allowed if more than 30% of lynx habitat in a LAU is in a stand initiation structural stage (i.e., early stand initiation stage) that does not provide winter snowshoe hare habitat, except for limited fuel treatments in the wildland urban interface. These acres are applied towards Standard VEG S1 in the NRLMD

<sup>2</sup> Portion of the total LAU acres that provide lynx habitat (suitable + unsuitable acres). No more than 15% of lynx habitat on NFS lands in a LAU may be changed by regeneration harvest in a 10-year period. These acres are applied towards Standard VEG S2 in the NRLMD

<sup>3</sup> Those KNF LAUs north of Highway 2 are within designated Critical Habitat for lynx. Those LAUs south of Highway 2 are not within designated Critical Habitat (USDI 2009). There are additionally 5,583 acres of KNF lands within Critical Habitat that occurs outside of any LAU. Those 5,583 acres consist of islands of KNF lands surrounded by corporate lands in the southeast part of the Forest near McGregor Lake. Not all of those 5,583 acres would actually be lynx habitat (spruce-fir types), although the exact amount of non-lynx habitat within those 5,583 acres is not known

<sup>4</sup> Stand data for non-NFS lands is based primarily on photo-interpretation. Habitat types are inferred based on information for adjacent stands. Stand data is updated when vegetation management activities are known to have occurred. Some non-NFS landowners may provide stand data, if available

Lynx habitat on the KNF was modeled by Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) in 2012 (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. Table 39 below displays two of the relevant scenarios. The existing 1987 Forest Plan as amended by the 2007 NRLMD was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan and NRLMD into context. Both consider a warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes. Both of these scenarios also considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future and both considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads. Under both scenarios the acreage of actual multi-story foraging habitat doubles over five decades. Notably, the change in the vegetation component of lynx habitat was modeled in light of a warmer/drier climate (which could alter the amount and location of lynx habitat in the future). Some of the large acreage of stands in the middle size class that currently exists on the KNF converts into the large size class over the next five decades. This contributes to an increase in multi-story lynx foraging habitat. However, a lack of adequate snow in the long-term may render some of that habitat less than optimal for lynx in the long-term, even if the vegetation components are there.

**Table 39. Acres of Lynx Multi-story Foraging and Stand Initiation Habitat (ERG 2012)**

Decade	1987 Forest Plan as amended by the 2007 NRLMD				No-Treatment Scenario			
	Multi-Story		Stand Initiation		Multi-Story		Stand Initiation	
	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat*	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat
0	149,781	263,572	518	718	149,781	263,572	518	718
1	148,584	241,667	508	2,050	148,759	241,759	498	1,858
2	184,605	255,279	508	3,096	185,250	256,015	493	3,127
5	285,567	338,328	0	8,410	291,248	347,041	0	16,148

Both scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression. "Actual" habitat are those acres expected to exist at a particular point in time. "Potential" habitat is those acres that don't quite meet all the criteria of being habitat at a particular point in time, but are on the trajectory to become "actual" habitat

\*The acres of "actual" stand initiation habitat is small likely due the SIMPPLLE model "regenerating" suitable cover types at lower than 70% crown closure for seedling-sapling size classes. It is likely that stand initiation habitat is more abundant than the SIMPPLLE model is able to predict (section 4.6.1 in ERG 2012). As explained in the ERG report, given that there are protections in place in the NRLMD for the stand initiation habitat type, and the shift in management focus to the importance of multi-story foraging habitat, the limitations of the model to predict "actual" stand initiation habitat, the ERG report did not carry the analysis of "actual" stand initiation habitat further

Possible lynx linkage areas have been identified (Claar et al. 2003, USDA 2007) and are intended to assist in land use planning in order to maintain connectivity and allow for movement of animals between blocks of habitat that are otherwise separated by intervening non-habitat areas such as basins, valleys, and agricultural lands, or where habitat naturally narrows due to topographic features. There are several (seven) identified linkage areas (Claar et al. 2003, USDA 2007, KNF Lynx Taskforce 1997) for lynx in the analysis area. See the wildlife specialist's report in the project record which contains a map of these linkage areas (taken from the NRLMD [figure 1-1 in USDA 2007]). Four of these seven cross private lands between parcels of KNF lands, while another two cross the Kootenai River or Lake Koocanusa. The remaining linkage area lies within the KNF along the Cabinet Mountains. Six of the seven linkage areas cross non-lynx habitat at lower elevations between LAUs, while the linkage area in the Cabinet Mountains is within LAUs at higher elevation.

A large portion of the LAUs are also within the recovery zones for grizzly bear on the Forest (62 percent of the total LAU acreage is within a bear management unit [BMU], including 53 percent of the acreage of LAUs within critical habitat – 87 percent of the total LAU acreage is within a BMU or a Bears Outside of Recovery Zone polygon [BORZ], including 86 percent of the acreage of LAUs within critical habitat). Canada lynx are afforded the security provided for bears in these areas. Security for bears is maintained by controlling and/or managing access and this maintains or improves Canada lynx use by reducing the risk of displacement and poaching. With the advancement in snowmobiles and increase in winter recreation on the Forest there has been an increase in snowmobile use throughout lynx habitat. Motorized vehicle access management strategies for grizzly bear were analyzed (USDA 2011). There will be lower levels of motorized vehicle access and an increase in the amount of core (secure) habitat which in turn would potentially provide higher levels of security for lynx. The majority of lynx critical habitat is located within a grizzly bear recovery zone or within a BORZ polygon on the KNF. Many areas of the Forest have limited accessibility for snowmobiling off-route due to tree densities and topography.

Within lynx habitat within LAUs on the KNF there are approximately 120 miles of groomed over-snow motorized routes and approximately another 46 miles of designated routes. Additionally, there are approximately five miles of groomed cross-country ski trails within LAUs and lynx habitat, and another five miles that are designated. These mileages are less than those found in table K-8 of USDA 2007 (Lynx Amendment FEIS) due to better mapping and some routes being dropped due to lack of snow (M. Laws, personal communication, September 17, 2012). There are no designated play areas on the KNF (table K-8 in USDA 2007). Within lynx habitat within the critical habitat boundary on the KNF there are approximately 100 miles of groomed over-snow motorized routes and approximately another 42 miles of designated routes. Additionally, there are approximately five miles of groomed cross-country ski trails within lynx habitat within the critical habitat boundary, and another five miles that are designated.

The NRLMD was intended to address the major threats to lynx, the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms, and as such, adverse effects have been reduced and jeopardy precluded through its implementation.

The KNF is within Critical Habitat Unit 3. There are approximately 911,403 acres of designated critical habitat on the KNF (41%). The majority of critical habitat acres (>99%, or 905,820 of 911,403 acres) on the KNF are within a LAU. Approximately 5,583 acres of critical habitat on the KNF in the southeast corner of the Forest is located in intermixed ownership and do not lie

within a LAU. Not all of the acres within those 5,583 acres would be lynx habitat, just as not all acres within a LAU are lynx habitat. Thirty-two (32) of the 49 LAUs (65%) on the KNF are located within designated critical habitat. Maps of the LAUs and critical habitat on the KNF can be found in the wildlife specialist's report in the project record.

The primary constituent element (PCE) of lynx critical habitat (USDI 2009) is:

Boreal forest landscapes supporting a mosaic of differing successional forest stages and containing:

- a.** Presence of snowshoe hares and their preferred habitat conditions, which include dense understories of young trees, shrubs or overhanging boughs that protrude above the snow, and mature multistoried stands with conifer boughs touching the snow surface;
- b.** Winter snow conditions that are generally deep and fluffy for extended periods of time;
- c.** Sites for denning that have abundant coarse woody debris, such as downed trees and root wads; and
- d.** Matrix habitat (e.g., hardwood forest, dry forest, non-forest, or other habitat types that do not support snowshoe hares) that occurs between patches of boreal forest in close juxtaposition (at the scale of a lynx home range) such that lynx are likely to travel through such habitat while accessing patches of boreal forest within a home range.

A large portion of critical habitat on the KNF is also within the recovery zones for grizzly bear on the Forest (53 percent of the acreage of LAUs within critical habitat – 88 percent of the total critical habitat LAU acreage is within a BMU or a BORZ polygon). Just as with lynx habitat, Canada lynx in critical habitat on the KNF, are afforded the security provided for bears in the Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear recovery zone and the BORZ polygons. Security for bears is maintained by controlling and/or managing access and this maintains/improves Canada lynx use by reducing the risk of displacement and poaching. With the advancement in snowmobiles and increase in winter recreation on the Forest there has been an increase in snowmobile use throughout critical habitat. Motorized vehicle access management strategies for grizzly bear were analyzed (USDA 2011). There will be lower levels of motorized vehicle access and an increase in the amount of core (secure) habitat which in turn will potentially provide higher levels of security for lynx. The majority of lynx critical habitat is located within a grizzly bear recovery zone or within a BORZ polygon on the KNF. Many areas of the Forest have limited accessibility for snowmobiling off-route due to tree densities and topography.

Of the seven identified linkage areas on the KNF (Claar et al. 2003, USDA 2007, KNF Lynx Taskforce 1997), five of them are at least partially within critical habitat or adjacent to critical habitat.

#### *The NRLMD and Critical Habitat*

Critical habitat was designated after the completion of the NRLMD. Although the NRLMD did not specifically address lynx critical habitat, it does contain direction that contribute to the maintenance of the PCE of lynx critical habitat. Table 40 below lists the NRLMD components and what part of the PCE they address.

**Table 40. Components of the NRLMD that Address the PCE of Lynx Critical Habitat**

NRLMD Direction that Address the PCE	PCE Component*		
	Snowshoe Hares/Hare Habitat	Denning	Matrix Habitat
ALL O1	X		
ALL S1	X		
VEG O1	X		
VEG O2	X		
VEG O3	X		
VEG O4	X		
VEG S1	X		
VEG S2	X		
VEG S5	X		
VEG S6	X		
VEG G1	X		
VEG G5	X		X
VEG G10	X		
VEG G11		X	
GRAZ O1	X		
GRAZ G1	X		
GRAZ G2			X
GRAZ G3			X
GRAZ G4			X
HU G1	X		
HU G2	X		
HU G5	X		
HU G8	X		

\*Deep, fluffy snow is also part of the PCE, but this is an environmental element and KNF management actions do not have any effect on it

The NRLMD, although it pre-dates the designation of critical habitat, does maintain and address those habitat features that make up the PCE. It maintains the vegetation components of lynx habitat, particularly those habitats that provide for snowshoe hares. Direction for providing denning habitat is also included in the NRLMD. Matrix habitat is not specifically mentioned in the NRLMD objectives, standards, or guidelines. However, there is direction in the NRLMD related to habitat components that could be considered matrix habitat. There is direction related to linkage areas, grazing, hardwoods/shrubs, shrub-steppe, providing alternative prey, and using fire to restore ecological processes to maintain lynx habitat. This direction combines to maintain or improve not only lynx habitat where snowshoe hares would occur, but also the interconnecting “matrix” habitat as well. The NRLMD was designed to conserve lynx, and although there may be short-term adverse effects for lynx, there would be long-term benefits or maintenance of lynx habitat.



### *Key Stressors*

Canada lynx are vulnerable to habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation which can result in displacement or abandonment of den sites. This can occur from the removal or degradation of suitable habitat conditions due to timber harvest or fire or from human disturbance.

The following Forest Service management activities may have had direct or indirect effects on forested, riparian, and high-elevation habitats in the past and potentially led to displacement of lynx:

- **Timber Harvest** – changes in mature and late-successional forest stand composition and structure affecting the amount and availability of large down wood and presence of multi-story canopy layers. Precommercial thinning can reduce the amount of snowshoe hare habitat, and therefore reduce habitat quality for lynx. Both fire and timber harvest can fragment lynx habitat.
- **Fire (both planned and natural, unplanned ignitions used to meet resource objectives)** – removal of standing snags and down wood, reduction of canopy coverage, or direct mortality;
- **Long-term Fire Suppression** – landscape-scale effects to vegetation composition and structure that interrupts natural disturbances;
- **Road and Trail Maintenance and Construction** – habitat loss and loss/reduction or fragmentation of secure habitat;
- **Recreational Use** – increased human use in suitable habitat areas; and
- **Development Opportunities such as Mining** – major mining activities (e.g., Rock Creek, Montanore, and Troy Mines) can include substantial mitigation plans.

National Forest System lands make up a high percentage of the lands suitable for lynx habitat; however, stressors to this species group that may cause habitat loss, displacement, or mortality that are outside the control of Forest Service management may include (addressed under Cumulative Effects):

- **Climate Change** – a reduction in cold climatic conditions that create and maintain boreal forests as lynx habitat;
- **Activities on Private and State Lands** – developments to support increased human populations that may impact connectivity between public lands. Decisions made by these landowners regarding management of motorized roads and trails on their lands, as well as vegetation changes could potentially result in impacts to lynx;
- **Hunting and Trapping** – Canada has a legal trapping season just north of the Forest. The state of Montana prohibits trapping of lynx; however, legal trapping of other species occurs in Montana. Some lynx home ranges overlap the international border. Poaching may occur but the magnitude of this form of mortality is unknown (page 2-16 in Ruediger et al. 2000); and
- **Loss of Habitat throughout its Range in Canada** – human use of lynx range can result in loss, fragmentation, or alteration of important habitat elements. In Canada, the main human activities that have and will continue to impact lynx range are timber harvesting, oil and gas exploration and development, coal mining, and the proliferation of access related to all these industries.

Lynx are generally tolerant of human activity (page 1-12 and 2-6 in Ruediger et al. 2000), although it cannot be completely ruled out that in a few instances human activity could create a

large enough disturbance that individual lynx may be temporarily displaced away from the activity. Most forest visitors do not venture far from open motorized routes, which again limit the opportunities for lynx to encounter humans. Motor vehicle use is limited to roads, trails, and areas designated on motor vehicle use maps (MVUM), and in general, cross-country motorized travel is prohibited. Cross-country over-snow motorized use is limited by topography and vegetation. Newer technologies may allow snowmobile users to access more area (page 57 in Cordell et al. 1990). The compaction of snow (e.g., from snowmobiles or other recreation trails) was thought to allow competing predators (e.g., coyotes) that are normally restricted due to snow depth (Murray and Boutin 1991, Murray et al. 1995) to access areas of deeper snow and therefore venture into lynx habitat during the winter. This was once thought to have an effect on lynx (Ruediger et al. 2000, page 93 in Koehler and Aubry 1994, pages 94-95 in Buskirk et al. 2000). However, Kolbe et al. (2007) found that compacted trails from over-snow motorized vehicles in their study area (western Montana) had only minimal impacts on coyote movements and foraging success. The results of the Kolbe et al. (2007) study and the effects of snow compaction on lynx were discussed in the NRLMD BO (pages 53-55 in USFWS 2007). On page 55 in the BO for the NRLMD it states, “The best information available has not indicated that compacted snow routes increase competition from other species to levels that adversely impact lynx populations, and under the [NRLMD], the amount of areas affected by snow compacted routes within the NRLA would not substantially increase. Thus the [NRLMD] would allow projects that may adversely affect individual lynx in some specific cases, however the [NRLMD] as a whole would avoid appreciable reductions in the reproduction, numbers, and distribution of lynx in core areas and all occupied habitat, and in the NRLA area.”

### **Environmental Consequences**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors Under Forest Service Control:*

**Timber Harvest:** The NRLMD applies to the existing Plan. Under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D FW-STD-WL-01 would be applicable. This standard states that the NRLMD would be applied. Activities such as precommercial thinning or treatments that may impact multi-story forage habitat would apply the NRLMD. The vegetation components of the PCEs of lynx critical habitat would be maintained or improved. In addition to the management direction found in the NRLMD, Alternatives B Modified, C, and D would add another desired condition, FW-DC-WL-01 which provides direction for den sites and would minimize the chance that timber harvest related disturbance at den sites would displace lynx. Additionally, timber harvest would be a tool to achieve the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-05, FW-DC-VEG-08, and FW-DC-VEG-11) in the revised Forest Plan and would maintain or improve lynx habitat. Moving conditions towards historic conditions in the lower elevation forests would reduce the chance of a large-scale fire beginning in those non-lynx habitats and moving into lynx habitat. FW-GDL-VEG-03 would retain downed wood, which would be support the NRLMD direction to provide for lynx denning habitat.

Table 41 below displays the results of ERGs modeling completed in 2012 showing the change in lynx habitat over the course of five decades (ERG 2012). Table 41 shows three scenarios. First, it shows Alternative B Modified. The 1987 Forest Plan as amended with the 2007 NRLMD and the “No Treatment” scenario are included to provide context for the alternatives. All three scenarios are modeled with a warmer/drier climate over the next five decades, leading to a larger acreage burned than has occurred in the recent past. All three scenarios assume that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future, keeping in mind that the model assumed that some of these fires would escape initial attack. “Actual” habitat are those acres expected to exist at a particular point in time. “Potential” habitat is those acres that do not meet all the criteria of

being habitat at a particular point in time, but are on the trajectory to become “actual” habitat. There is a large amount of stand acres currently in the middle size class, and over time a lot of these acres move into the large size class. This contributes to an increase in multi-story foraging habitat for lynx. Of note in the table is that under all scenarios the amount of “actual” multi-story lynx foraging habitat approximately doubles over five decades, and Alternative B Modified has the largest increase of the scenarios displayed. Additionally, after only one decade, Alternative B Modified has moved more acres into “actual” multi-story foraging habitat than both the 1987 Forest Plan and the No Treatment scenarios. It is the change in the vegetation component of lynx habitat that was modeled in light of a warmer/drier climate. A lack of adequate snow in the long-term may render some of that habitat less than optimal for lynx in the long-term, even if the vegetation components are there. The results for the other alternatives do not vary substantially from Alternative B Modified. This is due to the limited amount of vegetation treatments due to budgets compared to the amount of natural succession/in-growth of stands and natural disturbance processes. The ERG report concludes that all the alternatives “...are fully compatible with recovery and clearly minimize risks to species viability to the degree that habitat availability affects lynx” (page 80 in ERG 2012).

For lynx, as with wildlife on the Forest in general, it is wildfire, insects/disease, in-growth, and stand succession that largely determines the amount and pattern of habitat on the Forest for this species rather than management activities (pages ES-1 and ES-2 in ERG 2012).

**Table 41. Acres of Lynx Multi-story Foraging and Stand Initiation Habitat (ERG 2012)**

Decade	Alternative B Modified (acres of habitat)				1987 Forest Plan as Amended by the 2007 NRLMD (acres of habitat)				No treatment Scenario (acres of habitat)			
	Multi-story		Stand Initiation		Multi-story		Stand Initiation		Multi-story		Stand Initiation	
	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat*	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat*	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat*	Potential Habitat
0	149,781	263,572	518	718	149,781	263,572	518	718	149,781	263,572	518	718
1	155,185	243,186	518	1,713	148,584	241,667	508	2,050	148,759	241,759	498	1,858
2	195,527	258,049	503	2,498	184,605	255,279	508	3,096	185,250	256,015	493	3,127
5	304,014	341,772	0	8,832	285,567	338,328	0	8,410	291,248	347,041	0	16,148

This table adds a third scenario, Alternative B Modified, compared to the previous lynx habitat table 39. This table displays the 1987 Forest Plan and the no treatment scenario to provide context for the alternatives. All scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression. "Actual" habitat are those acres expected to exist at a particular point in time. "Potential" habitat are those acres that do not quite meet all the criteria of being habitat at a particular point in time, but are on the trajectory to become "actual" habitat

\*The acres of "actual" stand initiation habitat is small likely due the SIMPPLLE model "regenerating" suitable cover types at lower than 70% crown closure for seedling-sapling size classes. It is likely that stand initiation habitat is more abundant than the SIMPPLLE model is able to predict (section 4.6.1 in ERG 2012). As explained in the ERG report, given that there are protections in place in the NRLMD for the stand initiation habitat type, and the shift in management focus to the importance of multi-story foraging habitat, the limitations of the model to predict "actual" stand initiation habitat, the ERG report did not carry the analysis of "actual" stand initiation habitat further

**Fire (planned ignitions and unplanned ignitions):** The use of fire to restore ecological processes and maintain or improve lynx habitat is included in the NRLMD and applies to the existing Plan. Alternative B Modified, C, and D have more flexibility than the existing 1987 Plan to use fire (both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) and would be consistent with the NRLMD with regard to using fire (implemented through FW-STD-WL-01). The ecosystems in which lynx live are adapted to stand-replacing fires. That is how lynx habitat is rejuvenated over time and how habitat mosaics are created. Lynx have evolved with fire as an integral component in shaping habitat. Although fire removes downed wood and potential downed wood (snags), it also creates downed wood and snags. Generally, denning habitat is not limiting for lynx. However, under a scenario where a key area of denning habitat may need to be protected from a fire, part of FW-DC-FIRE-03 allows for the suppression of undesirable fires where necessary to protect key resources.

**Fire Suppression:** Fire and fire suppression have had a large impact on the distribution and amount of lynx habitat available on the KNF. Management under the existing Plan includes fire suppression in many instances, but also the use of natural, unplanned ignitions (see “Fire” resource section). Fire suppression leads to changes in the amount and pattern of lynx habitat across the Forest. Fire is a natural disturbance process that plays a large role in determining the quantity and distribution of lynx habitat. Fire suppression has increased the risk of a large-scale disturbance (fire) converting a broad area to unsuitable habitat in one event. The patch size of such an event would likely be larger than what would have been expected historically.

Allowing fire to play a more natural role over time will potentially create smaller scale disturbances and therefore a mosaic of different stand ages/structures contributing to future lynx habitat. Alternatives B Modified, C, and D have FW-DC-FIRE-03 that provides direction to allow the increased role of fire in helping trend vegetation towards desired conditions. Those desired conditions are based on historic conditions where fire was a natural part of the ecosystem. Lynx evolved with those conditions and consequently will have the amounts and arrangements of habitats similar to what they evolved with.

Under the revised Forest Plan there will be varying amounts of predicted active fuels reduction among the action alternatives. Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres). These acreage estimates were modeled with the assumption that the treatments had to meet the direction in the NRLMD; therefore these estimates are consistent with the direction the NRLMD.

Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will be more likely in MA1, and

Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres). Both passive and active restoration, and a general trend towards the desired conditions for vegetation under the action alternatives, will aid in creating more resilient and sustainable lynx habitat. Passive restoration will be a more realistic option in places such as wilderness areas. Those lower-elevation forests with a greater departure from historic conditions may require active restoration (mechanical treatments) before fire can be reintroduced to those landscapes. The risk of stand-replacing fire over large scales will be reduced in the long term under the action alternatives, thereby allowing patch sizes to better approximate historic conditions and maintain heterogeneity of stand conditions. Even where lynx habitat is within historic conditions, restoring non-lynx habitat to historic conditions will reduce the chance of a large-scale fire starting in the lower-elevation forests and moving into lynx habitat. Implementation of FW-DC-FIRE-03 will be useful to maintain or improve lynx habitat conditions and allow fire to play a more natural role in the ecosystem. Further direction in the revised Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. This direction in the revised Plan offers more flexibility than the existing 1987 Forest Plan to use fire (planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) to move towards the desired conditions for vegetation. The direction for the use of fire in the revised Forest Plan is consistent with the direction in the NRLMD.

**Landscape Connectivity:** Connectivity of lynx habitat is incorporated into the existing Plan through the NRLMD. In Alternatives B Modified, C, and D, FW-STD-WL-01 applies the NRLMD. The direction in the revised Forest Plan is consistent with the direction in the NRLMD, including the GA direction in the revised Forest Plan which identifies general areas to provide connectivity for wildlife. That GA direction is consistent with the linkage areas identified in the NRLMD.

FW-DC-WL-17 and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14 also provide direction relative to connectivity. FW-GDL-WL-12 in the revised Forest Plan states: “During the construction or reconstruction of highways that cross national forest lands, or high use forest roads, wildlife crossing features should be included in the design where necessary to contribute to connectivity of wildlife populations.” FW-GDL-WL-13 in the revised Forest Plan states: “Management activities within one-quarter mile of existing crossing features, and future crossing features developed through interagency coordination, should not prevent wildlife from using the crossing features. The vegetation and structural components of connectivity, including snags and downed wood, should be managed according to the desired conditions for vegetation.” The revised Forest Plan defines a wildlife crossing as: “A structure that facilitates the safe movement of wildlife across a man-made barrier such as a highway or railroad, or warning systems for motorists that reduce the likelihood of a collision with wildlife. Examples include overpasses, underpasses, culverts, fencing, and electronic systems that detect the presence of large animals and flash warning signs to slow down drivers.” No crossing structures currently exist on the KNF. The direction in the revised Forest Plan was developed to address the importance of connectivity. The development of crossing structures is dependent on future interagency coordination and collaboration with the public, primarily because the highways and railroads that may be barriers for wildlife are not under the jurisdiction of the KNF. However, the KNF may manage lands near future crossing

structures and have thus identified the need to manage lands near those features to maintain the effectiveness of those features.

Crossing structures will be developed through interagency cooperation and NFS lands around those structures will be managed to maintain their function. The vegetation components of connectivity will be managed according to FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-05, FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-GDL-VEG-03, and FW-DC-FIRE-03. In doing so, the arrangement and amount of lynx habitat, and therefore connectivity, will be similar to conditions that lynx evolved with in this ecosystem. Allowing fire to play a more natural role will aid in maintaining/restoring connectivity habitat to what lynx evolved with on the Forest. Geographic area direction that provides for connectivity within the Forest, and to adjacent land ownerships (including Canada) includes: GA-DC-WL-BUL-01, GA-DC-WL-BUL-04, GA-DC-WL-CLK-03, GA-DC-WL-FSH-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-02, GA-DC-WL-LIB-01, GA-DC-WL-LIB-04, GA-DC-WL-TOB-02, GA-DC-WL-TOB-03, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-01. These areas will include linkage areas identified in the NRLMD. Many of these areas either overlap lynx habitat within LAUs or will connect LAUs. This direction will also support lynx movement to habitat on adjacent forests and also into Canada.

Combined, all this direction will provide connectivity within the Forest and linkage to habitats outside the Forest. This will maintain opportunities for lynx to disperse and allow for genetic exchange within the lynx population on the KNF and with adjacent lynx populations.

**Road/trail Maintenance and Construction:** The Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones EIS and ROD amended the existing Plan (Access Amendment). In Alternatives B Modified, C, and D, FW-STD-WL-02 states that the Access Amendment would be applied. Although this was designed to reduce road related impacts to grizzly bears, benefits will also occur for other species, such as lynx. The Access Amendment provides large areas with limitations on motorized use, and these areas will have lower human presence because many Forest visitors stay near open motorized routes. Therefore there will be a lower likelihood of negative interactions with lynx such as disturbance/displacement and poaching opportunities during the non-winter months. FW-GDL-WL-10 gives direction to retain security habitat for elk, and this will benefit other species such as lynx during the fall elk hunting season. The security areas for elk will include areas that are not within the grizzly bear recovery zone but may still be lynx habitat, providing further security habitat that may be suitable for lynx across the Forest during the fall. Direction to provide security habitat for lynx and other threatened and endangered species will be found in FW-DC-WL-03. The transportation system on the Forest will have minimal impacts on threatened and endangered species, as directed in FW-DC-AR-07. Management area direction that provides for large remote areas with little human disturbance (wilderness and roadless) include: MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, and MA5abc-DC-WL-01. Combined, all this direction provides secure habitat for lynx across the Forest and will benefit lynx by contributing areas with less human presence due to the lack of motorized use. Lynx using habitat (denning, foraging, and connectivity) within these areas will have a lower likelihood of encountering people and therefore a lower likelihood of being disturbed or displaced by human activity.

There will be no difference in the specific roads or trails open to motor vehicle use between the alternatives. The acres available for cross-country motor vehicle use (except over-snow motorized use) will also not change. There will be a difference in the acreage where roads/trails may be designated for motorized use. Alternative D (1,792,900 acres) will have the most acres available in that regard, followed by Alternatives A (1,677,200 acres), B Modified (1,637,300

acres), and C (1,490,400 acres). The acreage available for over-snow vehicle use will be greatest under Alternative A (1,961,100 acres), followed by Alternatives D (1,988,500 acres), B Modified (1,920,500 acres), and C (1,814,800 acres). These acreages reflect what will remain open to over-snow vehicle use based on closure order issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan. The desired conditions for over-snow vehicle use will have that use allowed on 1,500,700 acres under Alternative C, followed by 1,713,000 acres under Alternative B Modified, and 1,859,100 acres under Alternative D. These are the acres where the MA desired conditions allows over-snow vehicle use. These acres reflect the intent for future closures, following site-specific winter travel management. In addition to the differences in MA allocations among the alternatives, the existing area closures on the Forest will be retained under all alternatives. Mechanized use will be allowed on more acres in Alternative A (2,125,400 acres), followed by Alternatives D (2,082,200 acres), B Modified (2,012,900 acres), and C (1,902,700 acres). However, not every acre will be accessible due to terrain and vegetation.

The more acres available for these type of uses, the greater the chance of disturbance to individual lynx. However, there will be habitat available on the Forest where motorized use will not occur or some uses will be restricted, including wilderness, roadless, and non-motorized backcountry. Thus lynx will have acres available with less human presence, with the greatest amount under Alternative C, followed by Alternative B Modified, then D and A.

The NRLMD applies to the existing Plan and includes direction related to roads and recreation, which are designed to maintain or improve lynx habitat. In Alternatives B Modified, C, and D, FW-STD-WL-01 states that the NRLMD will be applied.

**Recreational Use:** The direction listed above for road/trail maintenance and construction will also reduce impacts from recreation. Recreational use is generally dependent on a road and trail system to facilitate access. Although lynx are generally tolerant of human presence (pages 1-12 and 2-6 in Ruediger et al. 2000), disturbance may be great enough to cause displacement of individual cats in some circumstances. FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, and MA5abc-DC-WL-01 create and maintain large, remote security habitats that are likely to have a lower amount of recreational use due to the difficulties of access. Therefore, areas with lower recreational use will be available across the Forest for lynx to use.

The NRLMD applies to all alternatives (FW-STD-WL-01) and includes direction for limiting the effects of human uses on lynx and their habitats.

**Mining:** The NRLMD applies to the existing Plan and contains direction related to mining activities in lynx habitat. Alternatives B Modified, C, and D will be consistent with that direction (implemented through FW-STD-WL-01).

Direction in the revised Forest Plan that will apply to mining includes FW-DC-WL-03 which states that populations of threatened and endangered species trend towards recovery and that habitat will be available on NFS lands for occupation. Den sites will be protected through FW-DC-WL-01. Depending on the individual circumstances, a haul/supply route could have substantial traffic and may impact connectivity. If so, then FW-DC-WL-17 and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14 will provide direction for maintaining connectivity and applies not only to highways, but also to high-use Forest roads such as a haul/supply route.



### *Analysis of Effects on Critical Habitat*

The final rule designating critical habitat (USFWS 2009) also described three types of actions that may adversely affect critical habitat. Briefly, these are:

1. Actions that would reduce or remove understory vegetation within boreal forest stands on a scale proportionate to the large landscape used by lynx....These activities could significantly reduce the quality of snowshoe hare habitat such that the landscape's ability to produce adequate densities of snowshoe hares to support persistent lynx populations is at least temporarily diminished.
2. Actions that would cause permanent loss or conversion of the boreal forest on a scale proportionate to the large landscape used by lynx....Such activities could eliminate and fragment lynx and snowshoe hare habitat.
3. Actions that would increase traffic volume and speed on roads that divide lynx critical habitat....These activities could reduce connectivity within the boreal landscape for lynx, and could result in increased mortality of lynx.

In matrix habitat, activities that change vegetation structure or condition would not be considered an adverse effect to lynx critical habitat unless those activities would create a barrier or impede lynx movement between patches of foraging habitat and between foraging and denning habitat within a potential home range, or if they adversely affect adjacent foraging or denning habitat.

The previous sections of this report analyzed the impacts of the revised Forest Plan on lynx, primarily by analyzing the effects on the habitat required by lynx. Thus, that analysis also provides an analysis of the specific impacts on lynx critical habitat. The PCE for lynx critical habitat and the actions resulting in adverse effects on critical habitat are described above. This guidance directs the analysis of effects below.

There are approximately 909,816 acres of designated critical habitat on the KNF (41%). The majority of critical habitat acres (99%, or 904,242 of 909,816 acres) on the KNF are within a LAU. Approximately 5,583 acres of critical habitat on the KNF in the southeast corner of the Forest is located in intermixed ownership and do not lie within a LAU. Not all of the acres within those 5,583 acres would be lynx habitat, just as not all acres within a LAU are lynx habitat. Thirty-two (32) of the 49 LAUs (65%) on the KNF are located within designated critical habitat.

The NRLMD, although it pre-dates the designation of critical habitat, does maintain and address those habitat features that make up the PCE. It maintains the vegetation components of lynx habitat, particularly those habitats that provide for snowshoe hares. Direction for providing denning habitat is also included in the NRLMD. Matrix habitat is not specifically mentioned in the NRLMD objectives, standards, or guidelines. However, there is direction in the NRLMD related to habitat components that could be considered matrix habitat. There is direction related to linkage areas, grazing, hardwoods/shrubs, shrub-steppe, providing alternative prey, and using fire to restore ecological processes to maintain lynx habitat. This direction combines to maintain or improve not only lynx habitat where snowshoe hares would occur, but also the interconnecting "matrix" habitat as well. The NRLMD was designed to conserve lynx, and although there may be short-term adverse effects for lynx, there would be long-term benefits or maintenance of lynx habitat.

### *Actions that would reduce or remove understory vegetation within boreal forest stands*

*on a scale proportionate to the large landscape used by lynx....These activities could significantly reduce the quality of snowshoe hare habitat such that the landscape's ability to produce adequate densities of snowshoe hares to support persistent lynx populations is at least temporarily diminished.*

The vegetation components of the PCE of lynx critical habitat will be maintained or improved under the revised Forest Plan. Timber harvest, thinning, fire suppression, and fire use can all result in effects on the understory vegetation within boreal forest stands in critical habitat, although most result in temporary changes. The effects will be same as discussed previously for lynx habitat. With all vegetation management, the NRLMD will be applied under all of the alternatives. Activities such as precommercial thinning or treatments that may impact multi-story forage habitat will also apply the NRLMD. Although there may be short-term adverse effects, in the long-term the PCE of lynx habitat will be maintained or improved. By implementing the NRLMD, understory vegetation in boreal forest stands in critical habitat will be maintained. As described earlier, the amount of multi-story forage habitat on the KNF is expected to double over the next five decades under the action alternatives.

The use of fire (planned and unplanned ignitions) to restore ecological processes and maintain or improve lynx habitat is included in the NRLMD and applies to the existing Plan. The action alternatives have more flexibility than the existing 1987 Forest Plan to use fire and will be consistent with the NRLMD with regard to using fire (implemented through FW-STD-WL-01). The ecosystems in which lynx live are adapted to stand-replacing fires. That is how lynx habitat is rejuvenated over time and how habitat mosaics are created. Lynx have evolved with fire as an integral component in shaping habitat.

Fire and fire suppression have had a large impact on the distribution and amount of lynx habitat available on the KNF. Management under the existing Plan includes fire suppression in many instances, but also includes the use of fire to meet resource objectives. Fire suppression leads to changes in the amount and pattern of lynx habitat across the Forest. Fire is a natural disturbance process that plays a large role in determining the quantity and distribution of lynx habitat. Fire suppression has increased the risk of a large-scale disturbance (fire) converting a broad area to unsuitable habitat in one event. The patch size of such an event will likely be larger than what would have been expected historically.

Allowing fire to play a more natural role over time will potentially create smaller scale disturbances and therefore a mosaic of different stand ages/structures contributing to future lynx habitat. The revised Forest Plan has FW-DC-FIRE-03 that provides direction to allow the increased role of fire in helping trend vegetation towards desired conditions. FW-DC-FIRE-03 in the action alternatives is consistent with the NRLMD. The NRLMD contains objective Veg 03 which states: "Conduct fire use activities to restore ecological processes and maintain or improve lynx habitat." FW-DC-FIRE-03 in the action alternatives states: "The use of wildland fire (both planned and natural, unplanned ignitions) increases in many areas across the Forest. Fire plays an increased role in helping to trend the vegetation towards the desired conditions while serving other important ecosystem functions. However, wildfires continue to be suppressed where necessary to protect life, property and key resources."

The desired conditions for vegetation in the action alternatives are based on historic conditions and natural processes where fire was a natural part of the ecosystem. Lynx

evolved with those conditions and consequently will have the amounts and arrangements of habitats similar to what they evolved with. The action alternatives are consistent with the NRLMD primarily through the standard FW-STD-WL-01 that states the NRLMD will be applied.

Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres). These acreage estimates were modeled with the assumption that the treatments had to meet the direction in the NRLMD; therefore these estimates are consistent with the direction the NRLMD.

In addition to the management direction found in the NRLMD, the action alternatives will add another desired condition, FW-DC-WL-01, which provides direction for den sites and will minimize the chance that timber harvest related disturbance at den sites would displace lynx. Additionally, timber harvest will be a tool to achieve the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-05, FW-DC-VEG-08, and FW-DC-VEG-11) in the revised Forest Plan and will maintain or improve lynx habitat. Moving conditions towards historic conditions in the lower elevation forests will reduce the chance of a large-scale fire beginning in those non-lynx habitats and moving into lynx habitat. FW-GDL-VEG-03 will retain downed wood, which will support the NRLMD direction to provide for lynx denning habitat.

*Actions that would cause permanent loss or conversion of the boreal forest on a scale proportionate to the large landscape used by lynx....Such activities could eliminate and fragment lynx and snowshoe hare habitat.*

The action alternatives contain desired conditions for vegetation that are consistent with the NRLMD and will result in the maintenance of lynx critical habitat. These desired conditions are based on natural disturbance processes with which wildlife, including lynx, evolved with on the KNF. These desired conditions also assume a warmer/drier climate in the future and the need to allow stands to be resilient to disturbance. An increase in acreage burned (natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions) under a warmer/drier climate and mechanical treatments to move towards the desired conditions for vegetation will result in doubling the amount of multi-story foraging habitat over the next five decades. The action alternatives will not only maintain lynx habitat, including critical habitat, but will increase the amount of suitable habitat on the KNF. Although where boreal forest habitat occurs on the KNF may shift as the climate becomes warmer, at least over the next five decades the amount of habitat will increase under the action alternatives.

The current Forest Plan as implemented will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The use of fire to meet resource objectives will be more likely in the action alternatives and most likely in MA1 (230,500 acres in Alternative B Modified, 204,300 acres in the existing Plan equivalent to MA1). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres). Both passive and active restoration, and a general trend towards the desired conditions for vegetation under the action alternatives, will aid in creating more resilient and sustainable lynx critical habitat. Passive restoration will be a more realistic option in places such as wilderness areas. Those lower-elevation forests with a greater departure from historic conditions may require active restoration (mechanical treatments) before fire can be reintroduced to those landscapes. The risk of stand-replacing fire over large scales will be reduced in the long-term (vegetation changes were modeled over the next five decades) under the action alternatives, thereby allowing patch sizes to better approximate historic conditions and maintain heterogeneity of stand conditions. Even where lynx habitat is within historic conditions, restoring non-lynx habitat to historic conditions will reduce the chance of a large-scale fire starting in the lower-elevation forests and moving into lynx habitat. Implementation of FW-DC-FIRE-03 will be useful to maintain or improve lynx habitat conditions and allow fire to play a more natural role in the ecosystem. Further direction in the action alternatives that supports expanded use of fire (planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. This direction in the action alternatives offers more flexibility than the existing 1987 Forest Plan to use fire (planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) to move towards the desired conditions for vegetation. The direction for the use of fire in the action alternatives is consistent with the direction in the NRLMD.

Matrix habitat between patches of boreal forest habitat will also be managed according to the desired conditions for vegetation. Matrix habitat will also be in a similar condition to that which lynx evolved with on the KNF under natural disturbance processes. Movement towards the desired conditions for vegetation will maintain matrix habitat and make it more resilient to disturbance (e.g., fire, insects, and disease).

*Actions that would increase traffic volume and speed on roads that divide lynx critical habitat....These activities could reduce connectivity within the boreal landscape for lynx, and could result in increased mortality of lynx.*

The NRLMD will be applied under all alternatives, including the direction in the NRLMD related to roads. Guideline HU G6 in the NRLMD specifically mentions that methods to avoid or reduce the effects on lynx in lynx habitat should be used when upgrading unpaved roads to maintenance levels 4 or 5, if the result would be increased traffic speeds and volumes, or a foreseeable contribution to increases in human activity or development. FW-DC-WL-17 and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14 in the action alternatives will maintain connectivity and is consistent with direction in the NRLMD for linkage areas. The action alternatives will maintain or improve connectivity within and between boreal landscapes for lynx on the KNF.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. The LAUs or critical habitat were used for the analysis boundaries, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., connectivity). The period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. Some vegetation habitat changes were evaluated on a longer timeframe if the effects were expected to last beyond the life of the Plan.

All past activities on the Forest has resulted in the current habitat conditions. Those current habitat conditions have multi-storied foraging habitat within HRV (page 80 in ERG 2012). Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression have created conditions that provide the amount of multi-storied foraging habitat that lynx would have evolved with under natural disturbance processes in this landscape. Past vegetation management has additionally created stand-initiation foraging habitat. The small amount of treatment in recent years, coupled with fire suppression, has diminished the amount of new stand-initiation foraging habitat on the Forest, although the more important multi-storied foraging habitat remains within HRV.

Fuels reduction efforts are possible on all land ownerships, in particular where they are near residences. Within the WUI, there are approximately 336 acres (<1%) of lynx habitat on state lands within a LAU. There are additionally 3,535 acres (2%) of lynx habitat within the WUI/LAU overlap on corporate timber lands (Plum Creek) and 147 acres (<1%) on other private lands. Of these lynx habitat acres, none of the state lands in the WUI/LAU overlap occurs in critical habitat, while only 58 acres (<1%) on corporate timber lands and 10 acres (<1%) on other private ownerships occur in the WUI/LAU overlap. Additionally, the 5,583 acres of critical habitat on KNF lands that are not within a LAU are surrounded primarily by corporate timber lands and some state lands (also within critical habitat). If fuels reduction activities on those other ownerships are done in such a way that they restore habitat that has been degraded by fire suppression, then habitat for wildlife can be improved. If not, then habitat can be lost for some species and connectivity impacted. If it is lynx habitat, then treatment will render those acres at least temporarily unsuitable. Although the acreage lost to these treatments on non-federal ownerships may be minimal in light of the expected large increase in multi-story foraging on KNF lands, those acres on non-federal lands may impact connectivity of lynx habitat.

There are approximately 3,333 acres of state lands within LAUs within the KNF boundary, along with 34,817 acres of corporate timber lands and 12,058 acres of other private lands. Of those acres of other land ownerships within LAUs, 2,506 acres of the state land is within critical habitat, along with 25,849 acres of corporate timber lands and 7,264 acres of other private lands. The critical habitat boundary within the KNF boundary contains lands that are outside of a LAU. Those acres in this category on KNF lands (5,583 acres) have been discussed above. When acres outside of LAU boundaries but inside of the KNF boundary are included in the totals, there are 5,626 acres of Montana State lands in critical habitat within the KNF boundary. Additionally there are 63,603 acres of corporate timber lands; 9,419 acres of other private lands; and 360 acres of USFWS land in this category.

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has developed a Habitat Conservation Plan that covers state lands within the KNF boundary. This HCP was “designed to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate the impacts of incidental take on threatened and endangered species as a result of timber harvest and related activities to the maximum extent practicable” (page 1-1 in Vol. 2 of MT DNRC and USFWS 2010). The HCP includes measures to protect lynx on some State Trust Lands in Montana.

The desired condition for connectivity in the revised Forest Plan (FW-DC-WL-17, FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14) will direct the KNF to work with other agencies and landowners when highways are proposed to be constructed or reconstructed to incorporate crossing structures where needed. The Plan will be in compliance with the NRLMD relative to connectivity. This will also aid in maintaining some connectivity between NFS lands as private lands are subdivided in the future. As other land ownerships increase roads to support expanding human populations and recreational needs, the importance of NFS lands to provide connectivity will increase.

Climate change will have the potential to alter the amount and distribution of lynx habitat on the KNF and adjacent ownerships. Coupled with past fire suppression, climate change can increase the impact of insects and disease and change the amount of habitat available for lynx. The desired conditions for vegetation and fire (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 05, FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03) in the revised Forest Plan will shift vegetation to a more sustainable and resilient condition better able to adapt to climate change. That will make lynx habitat more likely to be sustainable and resilient in the long-term as the climate changes. Maintaining connectivity of lynx habitat in the face of climate change may be challenging, but by trending towards the vegetation desired conditions, connectivity will be more likely to persist. Maintaining connectivity is important as distributional shifts are one way species respond to climate change (page 90 in USDA 2010). One of the primary constituent elements (PCE) of lynx critical habitat is light, deep, snow. Climate change may influence the availability of this PCE in the future, and it is outside the control of the KNF to dictate the location of this PCE on the landscape. This PCE may be located higher in elevation and patches separated by greater distances in the future if the climate become warmer.

Lynx and snowshoe hare are adapted to life in the deep snow. Changes in snow patterns due to a warming climate will put snowshoe hares at a disadvantage, and as a prey species for lynx the tight relationship between hares and lynx may dissolve as each species responds differently to climate change (Ruggiero et al. 2008). Disruption of predator-prey interactions can result when the species respond differently to climate change (Parmesan 2006). Lynx habitat may shift upward in elevation and north in latitude as the climate warms, and peninsular extensions of habitat may become fragmented (page 8617 in USDI 2009, Ruggiero et al. 2008, Carroll 2007). If a warming climate leads to less snowfall and warmer temperatures, snowshoe hare populations may decline as lynx predation efficiency increases. Snowshoe hare population declines may then lead to shifts in plant species composition, litter decomposition, nitrogen cycling of boreal forests, and effects on other predators/prey species linked to the lynx/snowshoe hare food chain (page 1202 in Schmitz et al. 2003). Gonzales et al. (2007) modeled the potential shift in boreal forest and areas that have continuous winter snow coverage for at least four months a winter. They predicted a potential decline of up to two-thirds of potential habitat in the lower 48 United States by the year 2100. Lynx habitat may shift northward as much as 125 miles. Areas that could lose potential lynx habitat in the long-term (around the year 2100) includes the KNF (Gonzales et al. 2007) [Note: the KNF specific vegetation modeling for the next five decades conducted by ERG predicts a doubling of multi-story foraging habitat for lynx, and this includes

modeling under a warmer/drier climate with increased insects/disease/fire. However, the model used for the KNF by ERG is not able to predict snow duration/depth/consistency. A lack of adequate snow in the long-term may render at least some lynx habitat on the KNF less than optimal for lynx.]

Legal trapping occurs north of the Forest in Canada and could impact the number of lynx near the border. It is not legal to trap lynx in Montana/Idaho, but trapping for other species is permitted, potentially leading to non-target species like lynx being impacted.

In Canada, the main human activities that have and will continue to impact lynx range are timber harvesting, oil and gas exploration and development, coal mining, and the proliferation of access that comes from all these industries. Loss of habitat in Canada, and a decline in lynx populations, could impact populations on the Forest due to the Forest being at the southern extent of the range for lynx. Populations in Canada provide gene flow into lynx populations south of the border (Schwartz et al. 2002). This emphasizes the desire to provide connectivity on the Forest as discussed under the “Effects” sections so that lynx populations on the Forest are connected to populations elsewhere in Montana/Idaho.

### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may affect, and is likely to adversely affect** lynx and would **adversely affect critical habitat**. The effect determination is based on:

- The Plan will be in compliance with the NRLMD through FW-STD-WL-01. Even though the net result will be maintenance or improvement of lynx habitat, there will still be short-term affects from the NRLMD. The NRLMD contains direction related to vegetation management, livestock grazing, human uses, and landscape connectivity. The NRLMD was determined to have adverse effects for lynx, and those effects would continue with the action alternatives. Activities such as fuels reduction and thinning could have adverse effects on critical habitat even if consistent with the NRLMD;
- The PCE of critical habitat would be maintained or improved through implementation of the NRLMD and additional direction provided in the revised Forest Plan. This includes direction related to vegetation (snowshoe hare habitat), denning, and connectivity of habitat. The desired conditions for vegetation and fire will maintain lynx critical habitat in the long-term, although there will be short-term adverse effects due to some lynx critical habitat temporarily being converted from suitable to unsuitable. Over the course of the next five decades implementation of the action alternatives, which includes the NRLMD, will result in an increase in multi-story foraging habitat in critical habitat and elsewhere across the KNF; and
- The ERG report concludes that all the alternatives “...are fully compatible with recovery and clearly minimize risks to species viability to the degree that habitat availability affects lynx” (page 80 in ERG 2012). Multi-story foraging habitat is expected to dramatically increase over the next five decades.

### *Grizzly Bear – Ursus arctos horribilis*

#### **Affected Environment**

Grizzly bear population ecology, biology, habitat description, and relationships identified by research are described in the FWS Grizzly Bear Management Plan (USFWS 1993), the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Guidelines (IGBC 1986), and the Forest Plan Amendment

for Motorized Access Management Within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (2011) and corresponding biological opinion (USFWS 2011), herein referred to as the Access Amendment.

Two recovery zones overlap the KNF: the Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone (CYRZ) and the North Continental Divide Recovery Zone (NCDRZ or NCDE).

The CYRZ is situated in the KNF, IPNF, and a small portion of the Lolo National Forest. A small portion (roughly three percent of the total acreage) of the NCDE is situated in the KNF; however, the majority is in the Flathead National Forest. The ecosystems/recovery zones are also tied to areas in Canada, with the back and forth movement of bears between the two countries. See the wildlife specialist's report in the project record for a map that displays the BMUs and BORZ polygons on the KNF.

In general, the BMUs and BORZ were used for the analysis boundaries, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., connectivity). The period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. Vegetation changes were evaluated on a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the life of the Plan.

### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) are habitat generalists, using a variety of habitats including the coniferous forests of northwest Montana and north Idaho. Habitat is generally dictated by food availability and distribution, as well as security from human disturbance and mortality. In Montana, grizzlies primarily use meadows, seeps, riparian zones, mixed shrub fields, closed timber, open timber, side-hill parks, snow chutes, and alpine slabrock habitats. Habitat use is highly variable between areas, seasons, local populations, and individuals (Servheen 1983, Volson 1994, Slone 2007, Weilgas 1994, Kasworm et al. 2010). Because grizzly bears have large home ranges, large areas of habitat are required. Grizzlies occupy low-elevation riparian areas, snow chutes and meadows in the spring and late fall, and move up to higher subalpine forests in the summer, early fall, and winter. Natural caves or excavated dens, often above 6,000 feet, are entered after the first snowfall and occupied for four to five months.

Grizzlies are opportunistic and adaptable omnivores. Grizzly bears have a large vegetation component (more than half) to their diet and have evolved longer claws for digging and larger molar surface area to better exploit vegetative food sources. Grizzlies feed on carrion, fish, large and small mammals, insects, fruit, grasses, bark, roots, and mushrooms. They often cache food and guard it. Grizzlies are known to feed on a wide variety of plants (36 to 74 species). Food habits vary locally, seasonally, and individually.

Johnson and Gautreaux (2008 pages 4-5) summarized grizzly bear habitat use in the CYE:

**“Spring Habitat:** The four most used spring habitat components in the Yaak portion of the ecosystem in order are: closed timber, timbered shrub field, graminoid side-hill park, and mixed shrub/cutting unit. In the Cabinet Mountains portion they are, in order: mixed shrub/snow chute, graminoid side-hill park, closed timber, and timbered shrub field.

A strong preference for south aspects is present in the Cabinet Mountains portion of the ecosystem. All aspects appear to be used in the Yaak portion; however, a slight selection for south and east aspects seems to be evident.



Spring habitat is primarily below 1,600 meters (5,250 feet) in elevation in the Cabinet Mountains portion and below 1,400 meters (4,590 feet) elevation in the Yaak portion. Food habits indicate bears are using grasses, sedges, succulent forbs, and the corms of glacier lily and biscuit root in the spring.

**Summer Habitat:** The three most used summer habitat components in the Yaak portion of the ecosystem in order are: timbered shrub field, mixed shrub/cutting unit, and closed timber. In the Cabinet Mountains portion they are, in order: timbered shrub field, mixed shrub/snow chute, and mixed shrub cutting unit.

In the Cabinet Mountains portion of the ecosystem all aspects appear to get substantial use with the exception of north aspects in September. All aspects appear to be used equally in the Yaak portion.

Summer habitat is primarily above 1,600 meters (5,250 feet) in elevation in the Cabinet Mountains portion and above 1,500 meters (4,920 feet) elevation in the Yaak portion.

Dominant food sources include succulent forbs, insects, and berries (mostly huckleberry).

**Fall Habitat:** The three most used fall habitat components in the Yaak portion of the ecosystem in order are: timbered shrub field, closed timber, and mixed shrub/cutting unit. In the Cabinet Mountains portion they are, in order: timbered shrub field, closed timber, and mixed shrub/snow chute.

In the Cabinet Mountains portion of the ecosystem all aspects appear to get equal use except south aspects in November. All aspects appear to be used equally in the Yaak portion.

Fall habitat is primarily above 1,400 meters (4,590 feet) in elevation in the Cabinet Mountains portion, with the exception of November. Lower elevation use in November (down to 1,100 meters) is associated with big game hunting season. Use is above 1,400 meters (4,590 feet) elevation in the Yaak portion as well.

Bear diets revert back to grasses and sedges during late rains and subsequent green-up. Berries may still be important when huckleberries are still available and mountain ash berries persist on plants beyond the first snow fall.

**Den Use:** The two most used den habitat components in the Yaak portion of the ecosystem in order are: timbered shrub field and closed timber. In the Cabinet Mountains portion they are, in order: beargrass side-hill park and timbered shrub field.

A clear preference for south aspects is present in the Cabinet Mountains portion of the ecosystem, however all aspects are used. In the Yaak portion south aspects appear to be avoided while other aspects are equally used.

Dens are around 1,700 meters (5,580 feet) in elevation in the Yaak portion of the ecosystem and higher (mean elevation of 1,891 meters, 6,200 feet) in the Cabinet Mountains portion.”

### *Management*

Current grizzly bear management in these ecosystems is governed in part by their threatened classification under the Endangered Species Act. Under the ESA no federal actions can cause jeopardy of grizzly bears. Interagency grizzly bear management guidelines have been developed for these managed lands and are part of the current Forest Plan on the KNF. In addition, the state of Montana has a grizzly bear policy (MCA 12.9.103) that outlines policy guidelines for

Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to promote the conservation of grizzly bears in Montana.

The Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan identifies recovery goals, objectives, and tasks necessary for recovery of the species. Many of these items relate to reducing human-caused mortality. Human access by motorized roads and trails can be a contributing factor to human-caused mortality of bears. The IGBC provided guidance for developing consistent management standards related to management of motorized vehicle access within the CYRZ.

Most of the management strategies for grizzly bears are focused on three major themes:

- Management of habitat to ensure grizzly bears have large expanses of suitable interconnected lands in which to exist;
- Management related to grizzly/human interactions that most often result in the death of bears (and sometimes humans). This is a particularly important concern for female bears because their removal may have significant impacts on the demography of isolated populations; and
- Research to determine the population size and trends to ensure that grizzly bear populations are not being jeopardized.

The goal for grizzly bear management is to provide sufficient quantity and quality of habitat to facilitate grizzly bear recovery. An integral part of the goal is to implement measures within the authority of the Forest Service to minimize human-caused grizzly bear mortalities. This goal is accomplished by achieving a number of measures.

All of the lands within the recovery zones have been delineated into one of two management situations; MS1 and MS3. MS1 lands are those areas managed for grizzly bear habitat maintenance, improvement, and minimization of grizzly-human conflict. Management decisions will favor the needs of the grizzly bear when grizzly habitat and other land use values compete. MS3 lands include private lands, campgrounds or other lands where grizzly bear presence and factors contributing to their presence will be actively discouraged.

For analysis and monitoring purposes, grizzly bear habitat within the recovery zones is further separated into bear management units (BMU), which approximate the size of a female's home range. Each BMU is monitored for various population and habitat components identified as important for recovery of the species. There are 22 BMUs in the CYRZ, and 2 in the KNF portion of the NCDE.

Past management actions on NFS lands related to motorized access (e.g., timber sales and associated road construction, road maintenance, and watershed improvements through sediment reduction from roads – including road decommissioning) have led to the existing motorized vehicle route system on the landscape. The Forest Plan Amendment for Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (USDA 2011) established standards for core, Open motorized route density (OMRD) and total motorized route density (TMRD) for each BMU in the Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone. Route densities include both roads and motorized trails. The standards that were established and their status (Bear Year 2011) are displayed in table 42. Most of the BMUs listed in the table are on the KNF, although BMUs 18-21 are primarily on the IPNF and 22 is primarily on the Lolo National Forest.

The Access Amendment used the best available science for these grizzly bear ecosystems to examine core areas, open motorized route density, and total motorized route density (Wakkinen and Kasworm 1997, Allen et al. 2011).

**Core areas** – the requirements of a core area include no motorized access (roads or motorized trails) during the active bear season, and a buffer of at least 0.31 miles (or 500 meters) from motorized routes (including open or gated roads). The goals are to incur no net loss of core area on NFS lands within all BMUs until all BMUs within the ecosystem meet all access standards. There is no minimum size for core area blocks (USDI 2011 page 13, USDA 2011 Access Amendment FEIS pages 78 and 335-340, USDA 2011 Access Amendment ROD page 60).

**Open Motorized Route Density (OMRD)** – is calculated on a BMU basis using moving-windows analysis. A moving-windows road density analysis takes the road density within a specified distance (“window”) around each pixel. A percentage of pixels (i.e., percentage of the BMU) within certain road densities levels can then be calculated.

**Total Motorized Route Density (TMRD)** – is calculated on a BMU basis using moving-windows analysis. A moving-windows road density analysis takes the road density within a specified distance (“window”) around each pixel. A percentage of pixels (i.e., percentage of the BMU) within certain road densities levels can then be calculated.

The Access Amendment also established timeframes in which all standards in individual BMUs in the SRZ and CYRZ would be met. Actual accomplishment dates will depend on management priorities, funding, and the completion of required environmental analyses (National Environmental Policy Act).

**Table 42. Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Bear Management Unit Summary for the 2011 Bear**

Bear Management Unit	Open Roads >1 mi/mi <sup>2</sup> (%)	Total Roads >2 mi/mi <sup>2</sup> (%)	% Federal Land	% Core	Priority
1 (Cedar)	15 (15)	8 (15)	99	83 (80)	2
2 (Snowshoe)	18 (20)	16 (18)	94	77 (75)	2
3 (Spar)	30 (33)	26 (26)	95	62 (59)	3
4 (Bull)	38 (36)	29 (26)	84	62(63)	2
5 (St. Paul)	29 (30)	23 (23)	97	58 (60)	1
6 (Wanless)	32 (34)	34 (32)	85	53 (55)	1
7 (Silver Butte)	24 (26)	23 (23)	92	63 (63)	2
8 (Vermilion)	32 (32)	24 (20)	93	55 (55)	3
9 (Calahan)	28 (33)	27 (26)	90	58 (55)	2
10 (Pulpit)	45 (44)	27 (34)	95	54 (52)	2
11 (Roderick)	28 (28)	27 (26)	96	54 (55)	1
12 (Newton)	43 (45)	32 (31)	92	56 (55)	1
13 (Keno)	33 (33)	25 (26)	99+	59 (59)	1
14 (NW Peak)	28 (31)	26 (26)	99+	56 (55)	1
15 (Garver)	31 (33)	26 (26)	94	54 (55)	1
16 (EF Yaak)	29 (33)	27 (26)	96	54 (55)	1
17 (Big Creek)	31 (33)	16 (26)	99	56 (55)	2
18 (Boulder)	34 (33)	35 (29)	92	49 (55)	3

Bear Management Unit	Open Roads >1 mi/mi <sup>2</sup> (%)	Total Roads >2 mi/mi <sup>2</sup> (%)	% Federal Land	% Core	Priority
19 (Grouse) <sup>3</sup>	60 (59)	59 (55)	54	32 (37)	3
20 (North Lightning)	35 (35)	19 (20)	94	64 (61)	1
21 (Scotchman)	37 (34)	27 (26)	81	63 (62)	2
22 (Mt. Headley)	38 (33)	37 (35)	89	51 (55)	3

Administrative use limitations are applied on individual roads. The Access Amendment established the amount of administrative use that may occur on each individual gated road within the recovery zone, based on the bear year (spring, summer, and fall). Each district retains a count of use that occurs by road and reports that information to the USFWS.

#### *Over-snow Motorized Use*

Kasworm et al. (2010) summarized den emergence data for 62 den exit dates from 1983 until 2009. Most (81%) occurred during April, but ranged from the third week of March to the third week of May (page 58 in Kasworm et al. 2010).

The biological opinion for the Access Amendment (USFWS 2011c) summarized the existing condition for over-snow vehicle access within the CYRZ. Those numbers have been updated for this analysis. There are 53 miles of groomed trails and 58 miles of ungroomed routes on the KNF portion of the CYRZ, and there are 7 miles of groomed routes and 4 miles of ungroomed routes on the KNF portion of the NCDE. Off-route use occurs on approximately 18,686 acres within the KNF portion of the CYRZ and 7,905 acres of the KNF portion of the NCDE. Off-route snowmobile travel occurs on about only 5 percent of modeled denning habitat within the CYRZ portion of the KNF and 21 percent of the NCDE portion of the KNF. Negative impacts on grizzly bears are primarily limited to the den emergence period (basically the month of April), particularly for female bears with cubs of that year. There is the potential of separating a mother and cub, which could result in cub mortality, although such effects have never been documented and there are no known scientific papers supporting this potential impact. This potential impact, and the limited movement of females with cubs during spring emergence, was discussed in Haroldson et al. 2002. Given the small population size of grizzly bears, the overlap of less than 10 percent of modeled denning habitat in the CYRZ, and the seasonally-declining numbers of snowmobilers by April of each year, the probability of a snowmobile encountering a female with cubs using a particular patch of denning habitat is low (page A-43 in USFWS 2011c – information cited in USFWS 2011c is from the 2009 draft supplemental EIS for the Access Amendment). This information can also be found in USDA 2011, which is the final supplemental EIS for the Access Amendment (pages 98-99 in USDA 2011). Even in the NCDE portion of the KNF, the likelihood of impacts to grizzly bears from over-snow motorized use is likely low. USFWS wrote in their 5-year review for grizzly bear (page 38 in USFWS 2011b), “Our best information suggests that current levels of snowmobile use are not appreciably reducing the survival or recovery of grizzly bears.” The NCDE population has been increasing and is likely headed towards delisting, so current levels of over-snow motorized use does not appear to be preventing the population from recovering. Also in the 5-year review, USFWS stated, “We found no studies in the literature specifically addressing the effects of snowmobile use on any denning bear species and the information that is available is anecdotal in nature [FWS 2002]” (page 36 in USFWS 2011b).

### *Outside of the Recovery Zones*

While the focus of the standards is the CYRZ, grizzly bears occupy additional areas outside the CYRZ. These areas are referred to as bears outside of recovery zone (BORZ). There are five areas (BORZ polygons) on the KNF and IPNF near the CYRZ. Within each polygon, baseline conditions have been established for linear miles of open roads and total roads. The Access Amendment established that there will be no net increase in either open or total road linear miles above these baseline conditions. Baseline conditions are displayed in table 43.

**Table 43. Bear Year 2011 Motorized Access Conditions for Bears Outside of Recovery Zone (BORZ) Areas Situated on the Idaho Panhandle and Kootenai National Forests**

<b>BORZ Name</b>	<b>Grizzly Bear Ecosystem</b>	<b>National Forest</b>	<b>Total Size (Acres)</b>	<b>NFS<sup>1</sup> Lands (Acres)</b>	<b>Total Roads on NFS Lands (Linear Miles) 2011/2010<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Open Roads on NFS Lands (Linear Miles) 2011/2010<sup>2</sup></b>
Cabinet Face	Cabinet-Yaak	KNF	28,052	27,093	164.1 (164.1)	130.0 (128.0)
Clark Fork	Cabinet-Yaak	KNF	101,899	100,421	236.3 (256.1)	172.4 (176.9)
Mission-Moyie	Cabinet-Yaak	IPNF	71,545	58,472	200.3 (200.3)	167.3 (167.3)
Tobacco	Cabinet-Yaak	KNF	287,240	266,947	1109.3 (1,123.9)	867.0 (867.0)
West Kootenai	Cabinet-Yaak	KNF	173,122	169,705	607.9 (615.3)	323.7 (315.9)

<sup>1</sup> National Forest System Lands

<sup>2</sup> 2010 represents the environmental baseline identified in the amendments to the Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2011)

### *North Continental Divide Recovery Zone*

The NCDRZ population of grizzly bears is considered to be expanding and is known to contain a large number of bears, based in part on DNA research (Kendall et al. 2009, Mace et al. 2012, and page 25 in USFWS 2011b).

Table 44 displays the OMRD, TMRD, and Core existing conditions for the KNF's BMUs within the NCDE. Over 99 percent of the acres in both Krinklehorn and Therriault are NFS lands, with less than 1 percent private lands (approximately 360 acres private lands in Krinklehorn and 140 acres private in Therriault).

**Table 44. Core, OMRD, and TMRD parameters for the BMU subunits within the North Continental Divide Recovery Zone (NCDRZ) Located on the KNF as of 2010 (have not changed since 2008)**

<b>BMU Subunit</b>	<b>OMRD</b>	<b>TMRD</b>	<b>Core</b>
Krinklehorn BMU (47,151 acres)	18%	11%	75%
Therriault BMU (67,538 acres)	23%	10%	71%

### *Habitat connectivity*

Habitat connectivity within and between the SRZ and CYRZ has been identified as a possible factor that influences habitat (Servheen et al. 2001 and 2003, Proctor et al. 2002 and 2005). The main "fracture zones" identified in Servheen et al. (2003) that overlap the boundary of the KNF are:

1. In the CYRZ – Highways 2 and 56 and the railway lines that parallel Highway 2;
2. Between the CYRZ and the Bitterroot mountains – Highway 200 and the parallel railway;
- and
3. Between the CYRZ and the NCDRZ – Highways 2 and 93.

Although it is important to provide connectivity between the CYRZ and the SRZ, the “fracture zone” between the two does not overlap KNF lands and nor do the “linkages” identified in Servheen et al. (2003). Connectivity between the KNFs BMUs in the CYRZ and the NCDRZ is involved in the “fracture zone” between those two recovery zones listed in Servheen et al. (2003) and are associated with Highways 2 and 93. One occurrence of grizzly bear movement between the SRZ and CYRZ has been documented and another SRZ bear is suspected of moving to the Bitterroot ecosystem (Kasworm and Johnson 2008a). In addition, occurrences of bear movement between the CYRZ and NCDRZ have been confirmed (ibid).

Proctor et al. (2012) looked at population fragmentation and inter-ecosystem movements of grizzly bears in the northern US and western Canada. It is important that a small population like the Cabinet-Yaak is connected to larger populations in the NCDE and north in Canada to allow movement of bears, particularly females, into the CYRZ.

#### *Attractants*

Human-bear conflicts are also reduced through limiting attractants via mandatory food storage orders. Mandatory food storage orders on both the KNF and portions of the IPNF were implemented in 2011 to replace the voluntary orders and this would continue under the action alternatives. Previously, in 2001, the KNF implemented forestwide voluntary food storage guidelines to encourage national forest users to store food in a manner that reduces human-bear conflicts.

The 2011 mandatory food storage order (“Occupancy and Use Restrictions – Food Storage and Sanitation Special Order”) prohibits:

1. Improperly possessing or storing any food, refuse or other attractant, as specified in the order from March 1 through December 1 annually. [36 CFR 261.58 (cc)];
2. Improperly camping as specified in the Order March 1 through December 1 annually. [36 CFR 261.58 (e)]; and
3. Improperly possessing, storing, or transporting any bird, fish, or other animal, or parts thereof, as specified in the order from March 1 through December 1 annually [36 CFR 261.58 (s)].

The order requires that:

1. Human, pet and livestock food (except baled or cubed hay without additives), and refuse shall be acceptably possessed or acceptably stored in bear-resistant manner;
2. Camping or sleeping areas shall be established at least ½ mile from known animal carcass that is on the ground;
3. Any harvested animal carcass shall be acceptably possessed or stored when within ½ mile of a camping or sleeping area or within 200 yards of a NFS trail (unless the carcass is being field dressed, transported, being prepared for eating, or being prepared for acceptable storage);

4. The responsible party shall report the death and location of livestock to a Forest Service official within 24 hours of discovery. In remote areas, where it is not possible to meet the 24 hour timeframe, the report should be made within 48 hours; and
5. Burnable attractants (such as food leftovers or bacon grease) shall not be buried, discarded, or burned in an open campfire.

The presence of food attractants may result in bear/human encounters that often lead to the relocation or the death of the bear. To date, there have been no grizzly bear deaths associated with food attractants on NFS lands in the CYRZ or in the two NCDE subunits on the KNF. There has been a concerted effort to improve sanitation on NFS lands throughout the ecosystem, with many campgrounds now having bear-resistant garbage and/or food storage containers to reduce such encounters and the potential for subsequent habituation. Currently, 39 developed recreation sites have bear resistant garbage containers on the KNF. Thirty-four other recreation sites have food storage containers.

Additionally, a reduction in motorized vehicle access under the Access Amendment may result in a reduction of dispersed campsites where food attractants might occur or a concentration of dispersed camping with more food attractants in fewer sites. Regardless, the mandatory food storage order would remain in effect, thereby requiring that attractants not be available to bears and thereby limiting the likelihood of a human-bear conflict due to attractants.

#### *Key Stressors (Risks and Threats)*

At the present, human-caused mortality is considered to be the major factor limiting grizzly bear recovery. Specifically, human-caused mortality is related to:

- Attraction of grizzly bears to improperly stored food or garbage (indirect and cumulative effect);
- Increased human occupancy of grizzly bear habitat, causing increased interactions and stress (cumulative effect);
- Hunting/mistaken identity or poaching (cumulative effect);
- Attraction of grizzly bears to the improper disposal of dead livestock (indirect and cumulative effect); and
- Chance interactions between livestock and grizzly bears leading to depredation on livestock (indirect and cumulative effect).

Motorized use of roads and trails within grizzly bear habitat may produce or facilitate several kinds of effects to grizzly bears, including the following:

- Direct shooting mortality may occur through mistaken identity for black bears or other game animals, through defense of life actions, through poaching for trophy animals, and through malicious killings (cumulative effect);
- Lethal attractants (human and animal foods and garbage) that arrive in grizzly bear habitat in motorized vehicles may result in habituated bears that must eventually be destroyed (indirect and cumulative effect);
- Some bears may become conditioned to the presence of vehicles and humans on roads and thus become more vulnerable to direct mortality through the means identified above (indirect effect);

- Other bears may be displaced from preferred habitat by the human disturbance associated with road use, with a resultant reduction in habitat availability and quality and potential effects on nutrition and reproduction (indirect and cumulative effect); and
- Direct vehicle collision mortality may occur along major highways within and between the recovery zones, both on NFS and private lands (indirect and cumulative effect).

Habitat security is an important element of grizzly bear management, helping to minimize human-caused bear mortalities. Schwartz et al. (2010) concluded that security habitat and road densities in non-security habitat can impact grizzly bear survival. For both grizzly and black bears, roads have been tied to decreased use of habitat or increased mortality due to human access (Brody 1984, Holland 1986, and Mace and Manley 1993, Mattson et al. 1996, Kasworm and Manley 1989, McLellan 1989, page 43 in ICST 2007, page A-39 in USDI 2006c, and pages 2-8 in USDI 2006d).

Grizzly bear mortalities, both natural and human-caused, are important factors limiting the growth of bear populations in the CYRZ (USDI 1993). The mortality goal for the CYRZ is zero human-caused mortality (USDI 1993). This goal has not been reached as a number of mortalities occurred since research began in the CYRZ in the early 1980s.

Legal hunting of grizzly bears no longer occurs (although it occurred in British Columbia until 2008) but grizzly bears are taken by poachers and occasionally are mistakenly killed during the black bear hunting season. As a result, Montana instituted a mandatory black bear hunter testing and certification program to help educate hunters in distinguishing species and reducing mistaken identity, and therefore, reducing grizzly bear mortalities. Black bear hunting seasons have also been shortened in recent years, reducing the potential for mistaken identity. Idaho has voluntary testing.

Of the 57 grizzly bear mortalities recorded between 1982 and June 2011 in the CYRZ, 41 are identified as human caused. Of the 41 human-caused mortalities that have been documented within the CYRZ since 1982, 78 percent (32 total) were ascribed a known cause of death. Management removal (of problem bears) and bears killed due to sanitation issues, poaching, or mistaken identity during hunting represented 53 percent (17 total) of this subset of 32 known human-caused mortalities. Seventy-five percent of grizzly bears killed under the management removal category occurred in British Columbia (3 out of 4 bears, with the fourth bear being within the US on non-NFS ownership). Mortalities on NFS lands tend to be associated with poaching, mistaken bear identification, and self-defense often associated with big game hunting activities (summarized in table A3 on page A-28 of USDI 2011).

Grizzly habitat has changed on the Forest due mainly to fire suppression over the last several decades. Natural disturbance processes that create openings, such as fire, have not been allowed to function naturally. If this continues, there would be fewer openings available to provide bear forage. Climate change can potentially alter the distribution and amounts of bear forage, and alter disturbance processes.

Major ground disturbing activities can also degrade habitat and displace grizzly bears. Mining is an example of a major ground disturbing activity. One large mine is currently in operation (Troy Mine) on the KNF, and two more are proposed (Rock Creek and Montanore).



## Environmental Consequences – Grizzly Bear

### *Effects to Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Attractants:** There is currently a mandatory food storage order for the Forest. This applies to all alternatives, including Alternative A. Additionally, under the action alternatives, FW-STD-WL-04 states that permit and operating plans shall specify sanitation measures included to reduce wildlife/human conflicts by making attractants inaccessible through proper storage and disposal. This would include garbage, food, and livestock carcasses.

**Road Impacts:** Current management of roads within grizzly bear habitat is guided by the Access Amendment. This is also true under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D. Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-WL-02, FW-DC-WL-04 and 05, FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, MA5abc-DC-WL-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-03, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01, and GA-DC-WL-TOB-03 reduce the possibility of road related impacts by creating security habitat with lower human presence due to lack of motorized access. This security habitat provides areas on the Forest where bears can escape the disturbance associated with roads. The chance of persecution and therefore poaching, as well as mistaken identity during the state's black bear and big game hunting seasons, would be less in these areas compared to those with open roads.

FW-STD-WL-02, in particular, is important for minimizing road impacts to grizzly bears because it states that the Access Amendment is applied. Motorized routes facilitate human access, so limiting the availability of motorized routes providing more habitat for bears where the likelihood of human presence is lower. In these areas the chance of disturbance to grizzly bears is lower, as is the risk of mistaken identity or intentional illegal shooting of grizzly bears during the state's black bear and big game hunting seasons, as well as during the rest of the bear year. Non-motorized access can still occur throughout the KNF, and although there is still a chance of human-bear interactions, there is a lower probability due to lower human densities in those areas without motorized routes. There is also wilderness, roadless, and other areas with limited or unlikely motorized use and; therefore, places where disturbed bears can shift their habitat use. FW-DC-WL-17 and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14 will reduce the impacts of roads on connectivity. Maintaining or improving connectivity for grizzly bears will aid in gene flow between populations and in recruiting bears to the CYRZ population from the NCDE.

There will be no change in roads, trails, or areas open to motor vehicle use in the alternatives (as designated per 36 CFR 212 Subpart B). There is a difference in the acreage where roads/trails may be designated for motor vehicle use. Alternative C (1,490,400 acre motorized) will have the least acreage allowing motorized use followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acre motorized), A (1,677,200 acre motorized), and D (1,792,900 acre motorized). Although those acres are available for designating roads/trails as open to motor vehicle use, not all of those acres will be open as actual motorized use is limited to the designations displayed on the Forest MVUMs. In addition, the Access Amendment, with its limits on miles of open/total roads in the BORZ areas, and other direction in the revised Forest Plan will limit opportunities for motor vehicle use designations and the potential associated road impacts on grizzly bear connectivity between the NCDE and the Cabinet-Yaak recovery zone. FW-STD-WL-02 would maintain or improve the availability or security habitat for not only grizzly bears, but other species as well.

**Motorized Over-snow Vehicle Use:** This is primarily a concern during spring emergence (essentially the month of April). Alternative A has 1,961,100 acres open to over-snow motorized use. Alternative C (1,814,800 acres over-snow motorized) has the least acreage allowing over-snow motorized use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,920,500 acres over-snow

motorized), D (1,988,500 acres over-snow motorized), and A (1,961,100 acres over-snow motorized). These acreages reflect what remains open to over-snow vehicle use based on closure order issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan. The desired conditions for over-snow vehicle use has that use allowed on 1,500,700 acres under Alternative C, followed by 1,713,000 acres under Alternative B Modified, and 1,859,100 acres under Alternative D. These are the acres where the MA desired conditions allows over-snow vehicle use. These acres reflect the intent for future closures, following site-specific winter travel management. In addition to the differences in MA allocations among the alternatives, the existing area closures on the Forest are retained under all alternatives. All alternatives have the same acreage of designated wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) has the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (36,100 acres). MA1a does not allow over-snow motorized use.

These acre figures are for the entire Forest, not just grizzly bear denning habitat. Only 5 percent of modeled grizzly bear denning habitat currently has snowmobile use during spring emergence in the CYRZ portion of the KNF and 21 percent of the NCDE portion of the KNF, for example; the Action Alternatives would potentially reduce this figure even lower.

Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-WL-01 states that dens for threatened and endangered species are relatively free of human disturbance when they are in use. FW-DC-WL-01 is supported by FW-GDL-WL-01 which restricts activities during spring emergence (4/1-5/1) where predicted denning habitat occurs. With FW-DC-WL-03, recovery of threatened and endangered species will be the long-term desired condition. FW-DC-WL-04 also states that low levels of disturbance exist in BMUs to facilitate bear use, such as denning. FW-STD-WL-05 states that no grooming of snowmobile routes in grizzly core habitat will occur in the spring after April 1 of each year. This will reduce the chance that disturbance could occur during spring emergence due to snowmobile use. Combined, this direction results in the lowering of the likelihood that over-snow vehicle use will disturb grizzly bears during spring emergence.

There is currently a low likelihood of over-snow vehicle use impacting grizzly bears during spring emergence on the KNF. The biological opinion for the Access Amendment (USFWS 2011) summarized the existing condition for over-snow access within the CYRZ. Those numbers have been updated for the BA. There are 53 miles of groomed trails and 58 miles of ungroomed routes on the KNF portion of the CYRZ, and there are 7 miles of groomed routes and 4 miles of ungroomed routes on the KNF portion of the NCDE. Off-route use occurs on approximately 18,686 acres within the KNF portion of the CYRZ and 7,905 acres of the KNF portion of the NCDE. Off-route snowmobile travel occurs on about only 5 percent of modeled denning habitat within the CYRZ portion of the KNF and 21 percent of the NCDE portion of the KNF. Negative impacts on grizzly bears are primarily limited to the den emergence period (basically the month of April), particularly for female bears with cubs of that year. There is the potential of separating a mother and cub, which could result in cub mortality, although such effects have never been documented and there are no known scientific papers supporting this potential impact. Given the small population size of grizzly bears, the overlap of less than 10 percent of modeled denning habitat, and the seasonally-declining numbers of snowmobilers by April of each year, the probability of a snowmobile encountering a female with cubs using a particular patch of denning habitat is low (page A-43 in USFWS 2011 – information cited in USFWS 2011 is from the 2009 Draft supplemental EIS for the Access Amendment). This information can also be found in USDA 2011, which is the final supplemental EIS for the Access Amendment (pages 98-99 in USDA 2011). The Action Alternatives would potentially result in even less overlap of over-snow motorized recreation and denning habitat due to the reduction in the acreage where this form of

recreation would be allowed. Consequently, the probability of a snowmobile encountering a female with cubs using a particular patch of denning habitat would be even lower than the existing condition, which is already estimated to be low.

**Livestock/Grizzly Bear Interaction:** FW-GDL-WL-15 states that the elements in the IGBC guidelines will be applied, which includes direction on grazing. The IGBC guidelines also apply under current management. Grazing occurs in six allotments that overlap BMUs (14,609 acres or 1 percent of the BMU acres on the Forest – this includes 4,880 acres in the NCDE portion of the Forest) and 13 allotments that overlap the BORZ (210,468 acres or 37 percent of the BORZ (mostly in the Tobacco BORZ and two allotments in the West Kootenai BORZ). All grazing permits will have sanitation measures to reduce attractants that would cause a human/livestock/bear conflict (FW-STD-WL-04). FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing occurs at sustainable levels while protecting vulnerable resources and FW-DC-WL-03 states that recovery of threatened and endangered species will be the long-term desired condition. If any livestock/grizzly problems occur in the future, this direction from the Plan will aid in resolving the conflict.

**Major Ground Disturbing Activities (Mining):** None of the action alternatives makes any changes in lands available for locatable (e.g., gold, silver, copper) or leasable (e.g., oil, gas, coal, geothermal resources, potassium, sodium, phosphates, oil shale, and sulfur) minerals compared to the existing Forest Plan (Alternative A). The action alternatives are the same as the existing Plan in regards to locatable minerals in that 264,000 acres are recommended to be formally withdrawn from mineral entry. There are no lands administratively unavailable for mineral leasing under the revised Forest Plan, which is the same as the existing Plan. The revised Forest Plan contains no stipulations concerning surface occupancy for mineral leasing, whereas the existing Plan had 515,000 acres where no surface occupancy stipulations would apply. Stipulations under the revised Forest Plan will be identified at the site-specific level. The disposal (removal) of mineral material (e.g., salable minerals such as sand, rock, gravel) under the revised Forest Plan is not allowed or should not occur on 772,000 acres, compared to 223,900 acres under the existing Plan.

Mining activities could potentially occur in grizzly bear habitat under the revised Forest Plan, just as they can under the existing Plan. Mining activity could result in loss of habitat within the footprint of the mine, disturbance to grizzly bears, displacement from habitat, or impacts to connectivity. Major mining activities (i.e., Rock Creek, Montanore, and Troy Mines) are active or are planned in the CYRZ. Each of these projects includes a substantial mitigation plan that addresses multiple risk factors including changes in motorized vehicle access, potential displacement, attractants, and law enforcement. These changes are not expected to provide security levels above those in the Access Amendment, but rather are expected to assure achievement of proposed standards, which result in an improvement over existing conditions.

Guideline FW-GDL-WL-15 states that the elements in the IGBC guidelines will be applied, which includes direction on minerals activities. The IGBC guidelines also apply under current management. FW-DC-WL-01, FW-DC-WL-03, and FW-DC-WL-04 will minimize disturbance impacts to grizzly bears. Additionally, the Access Amendment (applied through FW-STD-WL-02) sets access standards that each BMU will trend towards, so future mitigation will likely entail offsetting any increases in access and decreases in core habitat resulting from the mining or other land use proposal, such that the access standards will be met as per the Access Amendment. FW-DC-WL-17 and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14 will reduce the impacts of a high

use haul/supply route on connectivity if that is considered an issue for future ground disturbing actions.

The effects of mining activities on grizzly bears are not expected to be greater under the revised Forest Plan compared to existing conditions. Those existing or being developed under the existing Plan includes the Troy Mine, Montanore, and Rock Creek. The IGBC guidelines and the Access Amendment will apply to the revised Forest Plan, just as they do with the existing Plan. The revised Forest Plan has the additional direction related to connectivity. Combined, this direction will reduce or limit the potential impacts of mining activities on grizzly bears.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest, primarily within BMUs and BORZ, and adjacent lands. Areas between recovery zones were evaluated for connectivity effects. The period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. Vegetation changes were evaluated on a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the life of the Plan.

The primary reason for the low population of grizzly bears in these recovery zones is past persecution and killing of bears. Legal protections are now in place to protect grizzly bears. Information/education programs, sanitation programs, and access management have all been used, and are still being used, to help these populations recover.

Access management to limit the amount of roads and thereby reduce the chance of a human-grizzly interaction has increased over the years and resulted in the recently adopted Access Amendment.

Timber harvest occurring on private, state, or Canadian lands may impact the distribution, amount, and quality of grizzly habitat and may impact connectivity between NFS lands. The CYRZ and NCDE include approximately 229,000 acres of private and state lands. Activities here may cause avoidance of these areas, or conversely, increase the potential for habituation and subsequent removal or death of these bears for public safety. To date, there have been two incidents of grizzly bears becoming habituated to homes and food attractants (private lands) that have resulted in relocation or mortality of problem bears. The desired conditions for vegetation in the revised Forest Plan will maintain or improve habitat, including connectivity for grizzlies within the KNF, and contribute toward maintaining or improving grizzly habitat on NFS lands.

The desired condition for connectivity (FW-DC-WL-17 and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14) in the revised Forest Plan will direct the KNF to work with other agencies and landowners when highways are proposed to be constructed or reconstructed to incorporate crossing structures where useful. This will also aid in maintaining some connectivity between NFS lands as private lands are subdivided in the future. It will also help reduce road related grizzly bear mortalities. The most likely places for private lands to be subdivided will be in the valleys where communities already exist, or nearby. These are the areas that already pose difficulties for connectivity. The revised Forest Plan has GA desired conditions that allow wildlife to move to

and from Canada. There is connectivity issues in Canada (Proctor et al. 2008) associated with Highway 3 in British Columbia that makes it difficult for grizzly bears to cross that highway and associated private lands. Connectivity issues in Canada can impact the movement of grizzly bears to/from the KNF.

The Access Amendment established management direction for NFS lands within grizzly bear habitat. However, the CYRZ also includes state, corporate, and private lands. Decisions made by these landowners regarding management on their lands could potentially result in cumulative disturbance or displacement effects to grizzly bears. In many cases, the Forest Service will ultimately mitigate for these effects through additional motorized vehicle access management on NFS lands. The numbers used for road densities and core area in this analysis include consideration of roads on state and private lands within grizzly bear habitat, even though the standards apply only to NFS lands.

Past mining, ski area development, utility corridor construction, and other land uses on all ownerships have decreased grizzly habitat to varying extents. These types of activities may continue in the future and result in further loss of habitat or displacement of grizzlies. Grazing has occurred and will continue to take place on lands belonging to various entities, potentially creating an attractant such as carcasses, and leading to human-wildlife conflicts. The Rock Creek and Montanore mines are currently undergoing analysis and it is unknown when implementation may occur. The Troy Mine is preparing environmental documents for an updated reclamation plan and for further exploration in the vicinity of the existing mine. These separate analyses would determine the extent of impacts to grizzly bears and habitat.

Climate change can possibly have varied impacts on grizzly bears and their habitats, especially when combined with fire (or fire suppression), insects, and disease effects on habitat. Past fire suppression has led to an increase in fuels, denser forests that are more susceptible to insects and disease, and forests that are less resilient and sustainable. Large, stand-replacing disturbance will be more likely under current conditions and may be exacerbated as the climate changes. A trend towards the desired condition for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 06, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11) in the revised Forest Plan will move stands closer to historic conditions and make them more resilient and sustainable. Climate change induced shifts in vegetation may impact grizzly bear forage availability (page 91 in USDA 2010). Grizzly bears are generalists and eat a variety of foods, so it is difficult to determine the exact effects of climate change on the availability of different plant foods.

There is a segment of the human population that has developed a negative attitude towards bears that makes it difficult for them to coexist with bears. In some individuals that negative attitude towards bears may result in persecution of bears and possibly even poaching of bears.

Attitudes toward grizzly bears are associated with how humans view management actions (i.e., changes in motorized vehicle access) implemented to benefit grizzly bears (Canepa et al, 2008). If viewed as a loss of “freedom” to use the national forest, the result may be a higher mortality risk for grizzly bears. Reducing motorized vehicle access may increase this type of attitude, which could result indirectly in higher bear mortality risk.

Black bear hunting on both sides of the international boundary within the CYRZ has the potential to add cumulatively to illegal or mistaken identity mortality of grizzly bears within the cumulative effects area. The province of British Columbia and the states of Montana, Idaho, and Washington continue to allow hunting for black bears, as well as other wildlife species, on both sides of the border within and around the CYRZ. Hunter encounters with grizzly bears may

result in a bear death due to mistaken bear identification, self-defense, or opportunistic poaching. Changes in access availability with implementation of the Access Amendment may influence habitat use and attendant mortality risk by reducing access within the United States portion of the CYRZ.

MFWP and IDFG have a public education program to teach hunters and other members of the public how to identify grizzly bears and black bears. MFWP also has a public education program to teach hunters how to handle attractants in the back country. Bear specialists with state agencies are key to reducing grizzly bear mortality. Specialists deal with nuisance bears, work with landowners and the public to prevent the habituation of bears, and foster local public support for grizzly bear conservation. Wildlife attractants on private lands can lure bears into conflict situation. This may be in the form of garbage, pet food, fruit trees, or others. Bears that become habituated or a nuisance may lead to the bear being killed. Additionally, the more a bear comes into contact with humans, the higher the likelihood that someone would poach that bear. Not only does MFWP work to reduce mortality of grizzly bears, but they also augment the CYE grizzly bear population with grizzly bears from other parts of Montana (pages A-74 and A-75 in USFWS 2011).

The KNF also participates in information/education activities aimed at reducing human/bear conflicts and lowering the risk of mortality for grizzly bears. Some of these efforts are done in coordination with state agencies and others are done by the KNF individually. The Forest participates in public education by staffing booths at local events, participating in public meetings aimed at reducing human-bear conflicts, placing informational signs at campsites and trailheads regarding proper behavior in bear country and how to identify grizzly bears, and providing information at the front desks of district offices and the supervisor's office. These efforts not only reduce the risk of a human-bear conflict on NFS lands, but on other land ownerships where grizzly bears may be encountered as well.

The roads and travel management policy at 36 CFR 212 directs the Forest Service to examine the road network and give priority to reconstructing and maintaining needed roads and decommissioning unneeded roads. It also directs the Forest Service to manage motorized uses through a designated system of roads, trails, and areas. This policy is complimentary to road management objectives in grizzly bear habitat and may serve as a method for implementing road management decisions.

The NCDE population may soon be proposed for delisting and a conservation strategy completed. The details of a future conservation strategy are not completed, so it is difficult to analyze the impacts at this time. Any changes needed to the Forest Plan due to the conservation strategy and delisting of this population of grizzly bears would be considered at that time.

### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may affect, and is likely to adversely affect** the grizzly bear. The effects determination is based in part on:

- One key component of all alternatives would be the incorporation of the recently completed Access Amendment (FW-STD-WL-02) which reduces road-related impacts on grizzly bears. The Access Amendment determined that there would be adverse effects from implementation of the decision (USFWS 2011). As this revised Forest Plan incorporates the Access Amendment, the revised Forest Plan would also have adverse effects for grizzly

bears. The Access Amendment would result in most BMUs meeting or exceeding research benchmarks for core, OMRD, and TMRD;

- The parameters in FW-STD-WL-03 are the existing conditions for the NCDE BMU subunits on the KNF, and the NCDE population is nearing delisting;
- The acreage available to designate routes/areas for motor vehicle use and over-snow motorized use would decrease under Alternatives B Modified and C compared to existing conditions;
- Connectivity will be improved/maintained under the revised Forest Plan;
- FW-STD-WL-04 states that permit and operating plans should have sanitation measures included to reduce wildlife/human conflicts by making attractants inaccessible through proper storage and disposal. This would include garbage, food, and livestock carcasses. The Forest also has a forestwide sanitation order; and
- Those desired conditions for vegetation and fire are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes. Grizzly bears on the KNF evolved with those natural disturbance processes, so trending towards the desired conditions will restore/maintain grizzly bear seasonal habitat, forage, cover, and the vegetation component of connectivity. The desired conditions for vegetation, which are based on natural disturbance processes, will make grizzly bear habitat more resilient and resistant to large-scale disturbances.

#### *North American Wolverine – Gulo gulo luscus*

##### **Affected Environment**

The wolverine is one of several species of carnivores that occur on the Forest. Carnivores are important indicators of ecosystem integrity in that they influence the structure and reflect the vigor of the trophic levels upon which they depend. Several carnivores in the western United States have declined dramatically in the last century and a half and are listed as threatened or endangered (e.g., grizzly bear, Canada lynx), proposed as threatened (wolverine), or are considered sensitive by land management agencies (Noss et al. 1996, cited in Witmer et al. 1998). These species are mostly far ranging, elusive, shy and inconspicuous, occur in low densities, and are active mainly at night (Kucera and Zielinski 1995). Many of these species tend to be wilderness-oriented and have large spatial requirements.

The current knowledge of wolverine population biology, ecology, and habitat descriptions are described in (USDI 2013a, Copeland et al. 2010, Copeland et al. 2007, Copeland 1996, Inman et al. 2012 and 2012b, Ruggiero et al. 1994, Thomas 1995, USDI 2003, IDFG 2005) and incorporated by reference. Additional information is provided by the Montana Natural Heritage Program, the Idaho Data Conservation Center and NatureServe databases.

Information on population numbers, trends, and distribution are based on reported observations/sightings of either the species or tracks recorded in forest or state databases. No research has been conducted for wolverine on the Forest that would estimate population levels. Informal surveys are periodically conducted by Forest personnel during snote measurements, or during aerial flights conducted by the Forest and/or other agencies. Studies or research on wolverine has occurred in the adjacent Flathead NF (Hornocker and Hash 1981) and Glacier National Park (Squires et al. 2007) and in Canada (COSEWIC 2003), just north of the Forest.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis boundaries, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (i.e., cumulative effects to connectivity). Areas with persistent spring snow were the primary focus of the analysis because of the importance of

these areas as wolverine habitat. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years.

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Wolverines generally select areas that are cold and have persistent spring snow, but they do not select for any specific vegetation/habitat type (USDI 2013a page 7867).

Wolverines occupy a variety of habitats, but require large tracts of land to accommodate large home ranges and extensive movements (IDFG 2005, Banci 1994). Individual animals have large territories and can cover large distances in short time periods. In Montana and northern Idaho, home ranges have been documented as large as 384 square kilometers for males, although female ranges tend to be smaller. They use several habitats and have been located in forested drainage bottoms to high-elevation, sparsely timbered cirque basins.

Due to their large home range size and habitat needs, this species is rare and uncommon and most likely always has been. Wolverines use higher elevation, steep, remote habitat. Wilderness and roadless lands account for much of the areas wolverines are known to use, although it is unknown if this is due to avoidance of people, or that wolverine tend to choose areas that are not conducive to human development (Copeland et al. 2007). Wolverines appear capable of adjusting to human disturbance (USDI 2013, page 7880)

The primary habitat during the winter is mid-elevation conifer forest, and summer habitat is subalpine areas associated with high-elevation cirques (IDFG 2005). Summer use of high elevation habitats is related to the availability of prey and den sites. Forest types used by wolverines in northwest Montana include subalpine fir, Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, and Douglas-fir/western larch. More than 70 percent of summer locations and more than 50 percent of fall locations occurred in the subalpine fir forest types (Hornocker and Hash, 1981). High elevation habitats are used for relief from heat and denning (Copeland et al. 2007). Wolverines were more frequently found in low to moderately stocked stands of mature timber.

Inman et al. (2012) described wolverine habitat as “steep terrain with a mix of tree cover, alpine meadow, boulders, and avalanche chutes” (page 785 in Inman et al. 2012). They also state that wolverines experience a trade-off “...between resource acquisition on one hand and avoidance of predation and competition on the other. Wolverines balance these competing interests by exploiting an unproductive niche where predation and interspecific competition are reduced,” (page 785 in Inman et al. 2012).

Weaver (2011) mapped wolverine habitat in the Ten Lakes area of the Forest. Weaver’s map is based on work done by Inman (Weaver 2011 page 58). This map by Weaver (2011) is consistent with the expectation that wolverine habitat will occur in the Ten Lakes vicinity based on Copeland et al. (2010) persistent snow mapping.

Females give birth to two-three young in late winter to early spring. Young are born in dens dug through the snow to ground level. Dens are located in the upper subalpine zone, at or near treeline and are associated with boulder fields, avalanche debris, or log jams. A source of carrion or other food is usually nearby.

Wolverines appear to be highly selective in choice of natal denning and kit rearing habitat. Denning habitat may be a factor limiting distribution and abundance (Copeland 1996), and the persistence of snowpack into late spring is a strong determining factor in wolverine presence due to its importance in denning (Copeland et al. 2010, USDI 2013a). Persistent spring snow cover



may also be a determining factor in wolverine dispersal and has consequences on gene flow (Schwartz et al. 2009)

The wildlife specialist's report in the project record contains a map that depicts those areas of the KNF that tend to have persistent spring snow cover. The map shows areas with persistent snow as considered by Copeland et al. (2010). That map highlights the areas with persistent spring snow in an average of at least 6 out of 7 years. In other words, those were the areas to most likely have persistent spring snow and the most likely places for wolverine dens (Copeland et al. 2010, page 239). Those areas most likely to have wolverines are the Cabinets, West Cabinets, Northwest Peak, and Ten Lakes areas.

Inman et al. (2012b) found a link between persistent snow and wolverine foraging strategy. Wolverines appear to rely on the cold and snow to cache carrion. Cold, structured microsites are used to cache food and this reduces competition from insects, bacteria, and other scavengers for this food source. The authors referred to this as the "refrigeration-zone" hypothesis (Inman et al. 2012b).

In the northern Rockies wolverine natal dens have been found under snow-covered tree roots, logjams, and rocks/boulders (Hash 1987). In central Idaho, Copeland (1996) found natal den sites in boulder talus areas with a north aspect within subalpine cirques. No information is available on den sites on the Forest; however, it is expected that they would be similar to surrounding area den sites.

Wolverines are opportunistic feeders and consume a variety of foods depending on availability. They primarily scavenge on carrion, but also prey on small animals and birds, and eat fruits, berries, and insects (Hornocker and Hash 1981 page 1290, Banci 1994, pages 111-113). They are primarily scavengers and feed upon carrion or ungulates killed by large predators, such as wolves, bears, cougars, and humans or animals that have died from natural causes. They occasionally kill their own prey when the opportunity arises, typically small mammals. The constant search for food keeps them moving throughout their range; daily movements of 20 miles are common. Hornocker and Hash (1981) suggested that food availability is the main factor determining movements and range of wolverines in the South Fork drainage.

Connectivity between wolverine populations and habitat patches is generally tied to persistent spring snow, and wolverines appear to currently be able to disperse between habitats and through areas where human developments occur (Schwartz et al. 2009, USDI 2013a page 7879). As concluded in USDI (2013a on page 7879), "The available evidence indicates that dispersing wolverines can successfully cross transportation corridors."

### *Key Stressors Affecting Wolverine*

The stressors may cause loss of habitat, loss of connectivity, displacement, or mortality.

### *Stressors Outside Forest Service Control*

- Loss and fragmentation of habitat may isolate populations, reduce genetic diversity, and increase the risk of population extirpation (Copeland and Whitman 2004 cited in IDFG 2005). These risks result from three main factors: 1) small total population size; 2) effective population size below that needed to maintain genetic diversity and demographic stability; and 3) the fragmented nature of wolverine habitat in the contiguous United States that results in smaller isolated "island" patches separated by unsuitable habitats. Loss of persistent

spring snow related to climate change is the main factor in loss/fragmentation of wolverine habitat (USDI 2013a page 7865); and

- Harvest is considered the factor affecting wolverine survival, with trapping accounting for the greatest number of individuals (Hornocker and Hash 1981, Banci 1994, Krebs et al. 2004, Squires et al. 2007). Although harvest of wolverines is illegal in Idaho, incidental trapping may contribute to mortality in that state. The state of Montana, in its most recent regulations for fur trapping, identified wolverine management units with the KNF in WMU 4, the central insular mountains. The trapping quota for this WMU is zero wolverine. In order to achieve dispersal and gene flow among the areas identified as core (NCDE, Salmon Selway, and Yellowstone ecosystems) for wolverine, wolverines are protected in WMU 4. This protection could result in higher adult female survival, which is influential in population growth rate, but could also result in higher survival of young dispersing wolverines as they move through the various mountain ranges. Overall, the statewide quota is 3-5 wolverines. However, the USFWS proposed listing the wolverine as threatened in February of 2013, so the continuation of the trapping season in Montana is uncertain.

There are no Forest Service management activities that threaten wolverines (direct effects) or high-elevation habitats (indirect effects). Activities on NFS lands do not pose a threat to the viability of the species. Activities that are not likely to disturb wolverines, or habitat, and therefore threaten the viability of the species include (USDI 2013a pages 7890 and 7877-7880):

- Dispersed recreation such as snowmobiling, skiing, backpacking, and hunting for other species;
- Management activities such as timber harvest, wildland firefighting, prescribed fire, and silviculture; and
- Mining.

Wolverines have been documented to persist and reproduce in areas with high levels of human use and disturbance (USDI 2013a page 7877). There appears to be no evidence that the activities listed above (e.g., snowmobiling, skiing, timber harvest, and mining) translate to threats to subpopulations, populations, vital rates, gene flow, and population persistence (USDI 2013a page 7877). USDI (2013a) cited ongoing research into the impacts of high levels of recreational use on wolverines in central Idaho. The ongoing research has documented wolverines living in areas of high recreational use (i.e., disturbance) (USDI 2013a page 7878, Heinemeyer 2012, Heinemeyer and Squires 2012).

## **Environmental Consequences**

### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

There are no stressors under Forest Service control that would impact wolverine populations.

There is no direction in the action alternatives that will impact wolverine populations. Wolverines are not tied to a specific vegetation type, Forest activities would not change the amount of persistent spring snow, and the types of activities allowed on the Forest fit under the list on page 7890 of USDI (2013a). The action alternatives will not impact the extent of persistent spring snow, or the impact of trapping mortalities. Those are the two factors identified in USDI (2013a) as most likely to impact wolverine populations.

### *Cumulative Effects*

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. Areas with persistent spring snow were the primary focus of the analysis because of the importance of these

areas as wolverine habitat. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, for some effects, a longer timeframe was considered (e.g., climate change).

Climate change may alter temperature and precipitation, which in turn may affect the persistence of spring snow cover. Cold adapted species such as wolverines are the most likely to be impacted by warming climates (page 91 in USDA 2010). If the area with snow cover into late spring diminishes, then the amount of habitat available for wolverines would diminish. As habitat diminishes, wolverine reproduction may decline (i.e., lack of suitable denning habitat) and populations may become isolated (USDI 2013a page 7880).

Trapping, which includes illegal, incidental, and legal, can limit population growth or contribute to a decline. Trapping for wolverines is not allowed in Idaho but it is in Montana, although it is currently not allowed in the management unit that overlaps the KNF. The continuation of trapping in Montana is in question due to the proposed listing of wolverine as threatened (USDI 2013a).

### *Effects Determination*

None of the action alternatives is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the wolverine.

This determination is based in part on:

- There is no direction in the action alternatives that will impact wolverine populations. Wolverines are not tied to a specific vegetation type, Forest activities would not change the amount of persistent spring snow, and the types of activities allowed on the Forest fit under the list on page 7890 of USDI (2013a). The action alternatives will not impact the extent of persistent spring snow, or the impact of trapping mortalities. Those are the two factors identified in USDI (2013a) as most likely to impact wolverine populations.

### **Sensitive Species**

The sensitive species analysis in this document and the wildlife specialist's report in the project record meet the requirements for a biological evaluation as outlined in FSM 2672.42.

Sensitive species are administratively designated by the regional forester (FSM 2670.5) and managed under the authority of the National Forest Management Act. FSM 2670.22 requires the maintenance of viable populations of native and desired non-native species and to avoid actions that may cause a species to become threatened or endangered.

The National Forest Management Act (36 CFR 219.19) directs the Forest Service to manage habitat to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species. A viable population is defined as one that has the estimated numbers and distribution of reproductive individuals to insure its continued existence is well distributed in the planning area, the KNF.

Region 1 updated the sensitive species list in 2011.

*American Peregrine Falcon - *Falco peregrinus anatum****Affected Environment**

Peregrine falcon population biology, ecology, habitat description and relationships identified by research are described in USFWS (1999, 2003) and incorporated by reference. Additional information on the species is included in Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (2005, 2007), the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP and MFWP 2011) and NatureServe (2011). Formal surveys for nesting peregrine falcons, including those on the Forest, are conducted by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (Sumner and Rogers 2006).

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. Consideration was given to any effects that may last beyond the life of the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

*Habitat and Life History Needs*

The peregrine falcon inhabits a wide range of habitats from Arctic tundra, sea coasts, and prairies to urban centers. Most falcons nest on cliff ledges or crevices, but some will also use tall buildings and bridges near good foraging areas. Nests are scraped in substrate on cliff ledges. Adult falcons demonstrate a high degree of breeding fidelity and are known to reuse the same nest site for several decades (USFWS 2003). Peregrine falcons feed primarily on birds (medium size passerines up to small waterfowl). They have occasionally been reported to prey on small mammals (e.g., bats, lemmings), lizards, fishes, or insects (by young birds). Prey is pursued from a perch or while soaring (MTNHP 2007).

On the Forest, cliffs or rock substrates suitable for nesting are found along the main river corridors and adjacent valley bottoms, including the Kootenai, Clark Fork, which are used as feeding sites. However, according to biologists with the Peregrine Fund (Sumner and Rogers 2006), quality potential nesting sites consisting of sheer vertical cliffs adjacent to feeding habitat are rare on the KNF. Natural nesting habitat has not changed significantly since populations crashed and is still largely available.

*Key Stressors Affecting the Species (Risks and Threats) – Indirect Effects*

Activities on NFS lands within peregrine falcon nest territories have the potential to impact falcons during the nesting period, depending on the type of activity and the distance of the activity from an active nest site. Falcon nests are generally constructed in areas where human activities do not occur; however, activities within ½ mile of an active nest site have the potential to impact falcons (Hamann et al. 1999). Disturbance can displace individuals and cause nest abandonment. Nesting and fledging activity is generally between February 1 and August 31.

Forest Service activities that may have direct or indirect impacts on the peregrine falcon include timber harvest, road construction, quarry development, prescribed fire, fire suppression, and human activities that could alter habitat or disturb nesting birds. Nest failure can occur due to human disturbance such as recreational climbing (USDI 1999), or industrial activities, such as helicopter use or blasting. Habitat altering activities can remove nesting habitat or diminish the suitability of that habitat. Activities that alter habitat for prey species (e.g., migratory birds) can also impact peregrine habitat use and may lead to displacement.

Factors beyond Forest Service control include (cumulative effects): pesticide use, persecution, collection of young for falconry, mortality from illegal shooting and collision with wires, fences,

cars, buildings, and threats during migration and on their wintering grounds. A potential new threat that may impact falcon populations includes chemicals commonly used in fire retardants (memo associated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science 2004). These chemicals have been found in peregrine falcon eggs; however, the effect of these compounds on eggs is unknown and is being studied in the peregrines North American range (memo associated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science 2004).

### **Environmental Consequences – American Peregrine Falcon**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Disturbance:** Under current management, sensitive species habitat is managed based on the best available information. Disturbance associated with motorized use would be limited by the topography where peregrine falcons like to nest. Cliffs can be found near roadways, but peregrine falcons have proven to be somewhat tolerant of traffic related noises because they can be found nesting in other parts of their range on buildings or bridges. Recreationists near nest sites may cause greater disturbance. In particular, rock climbing in the vicinity of a nest may cause nest failure. Disturbance from a variety of activities on NFS lands can cause peregrines to be displaced or abandon nests. FW-DC-WL-01, FW-DC-WL-07, FW-GDL-WL-16, and GA-DC-WL-BUL-03 will limit disturbance around peregrine nests and will decrease the likelihood of displacement or nest abandonment. In particular, FW-GDL-WL-16 provides direction to place a timing restriction and distance buffer around known active nests where management activities should avoid or minimize disturbance. Helicopters and other equipment and human presence associated with fire suppression and prescribed burning could also disturb falcons and cause them to avoid the area. Nest failure would be another possibility. Smoke related to fires, natural, prescribed, or other human caused may cause falcons to avoid an area. Depending on the duration and intensity, that disturbance may last days or weeks. If that occurs during the time a nest is active, it may cause nest abandonment. Timber harvest will not remove nesting habitat, although activities near a nest may cause disturbance, particularly if the logging operation includes helicopters. Options include timing restrictions and specifying a distance from the nest within which helicopter flights could not occur.

**Habitat Alteration:** Under current management, sensitive species habitat is managed based on the best available information. Given the inaccessible nature of peregrine nests, they are unlikely to be directly removed by management activities. However, management activities that impact prey species habitat can displace peregrines. FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11, FW-STD-VEG-01 and 02, FW-GDL-VEG-01 through 06, FW-DC-FIRE-03, FW-DC-WL-07, FW-DC-WL-09 through 14, FW-GDL-WL-05, and much of the direction found in the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section will maintain or improve habitat for peregrine prey species. Primarily this will be improved or maintained habitat for migratory birds. Implementation of FW-DC-FIRE-03 will allow fire to play a more natural role in the ecosystem, and the vegetation will be managed for historic conditions and improved resiliency to large-scale disturbance processes. Migratory bird species will react differently to this with some species declining and some increasing. The quantity and arrangement of habitats will be nearer to what these species will have evolved within these ecosystems. Peregrines, also having evolved in these ecosystems under those conditions, may shift prey preference to more abundant species. Canopies will be more open, which may aid in peregrines being able to spot prey. Large scale fires will also be less likely, so smoke that would cause falcons to abandon a nest will be shorter in duration.

Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A.

Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will be more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. Consideration was given to any effects that may last beyond the life of the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past activities on NFS lands probably did not have a great impact on peregrine falcons on the Forest. Recreational activities are the most likely candidate to have caused direct disturbance to peregrines. Indirectly, past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression may have altered migratory bird habitat on the Forest and therefore prey distribution/availability for peregrine falcons. Water impoundments on all ownerships may have created waterfowl habitat and therefore increased prey availability in some locations.

Recreation is likely to increase on all land ownership types, if for no other reason than human population growth. This would increase human disturbance and potentially impact nesting habitat on all ownerships.

The effects of climate change on potential prey of peregrine falcons is likely greater than the direct effects for this species. As vegetation habitat changes in relation to climate change, then the bird populations and species distribution may change (page 90 in USDA 2010). This may mean peregrine falcon prey preference would shift to species that become more abundant as the climate changes. FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11, FW-STD-VEG-01 and 02, FW-GDL-VEG-01 through 06, FW-DC-FIRE-03, FW-DC-WL-07, FW-DC-WL-09 through 14, FW-GDL-WL-05, and much of the direction found in the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section will maintain or improve habitat for peregrine prey species. Primarily this would be improved or maintained habitat for migratory birds. Implementation of FW-DC-FIRE-03 will allow fire to play a more natural role in the ecosystem, and the vegetation

will be managed for historic conditions and improved resiliency to large-scale disturbance processes.

As on NFS lands, disturbance associated with human presence and most management activities would be minimized somewhat due to the inaccessible nature of peregrine nesting habitat. Subdivision of private property has the potential to alter or remove habitat for native birds and thereby change prey availability on those sites.

Due to restrictions on pesticides, mortality on peregrine falcons has decreased.

Persecution, collection of young for falconry, mortality from illegal shooting and collision with wires, fences, cars, buildings, and threats during migration and on their wintering grounds also impact peregrine populations. Chemicals from fire retardant have been found in peregrine eggs but the effects are still being studied (memo associated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science 2004).

### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for peregrine falcon. This determination is based in part on:

- FW-DC-WL-01, FW-DC-WL-07, FW-GDL-WL-16, and GA-DC-WL-BUL-03 will limit disturbance around peregrine nests and will decrease the likelihood of displacement or nest abandonment. In particular, FW-GDL-WL-16 provides direction to place a timing restriction and a distance buffer around known active nests where management activities should avoid or minimize disturbance; and
- Given the inaccessible nature of peregrine nests, they are unlikely to be directly removed by management activities. However, management activities that impact prey species habitat can impact peregrines. FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11, FW-STD-VEG-01 and 02, FW-GDL-VEG-01 through 06, FW-DC-FIRE-03, FW-DC-WL-07, FW-DC-WL-09 through 14, FW-GDL-WL-05, and much of the direction found in the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section will maintain or improve habitat for peregrine prey species. Primarily this will be improved or maintained habitat for migratory birds.

### *Bald Eagle – *Haliaeetus leucocephalus**

#### **Affected Environment**

Bald eagle population biology, ecology, habitat description and relationships identified by research are described in USFWS (1986, 2007), the Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan (MBEWG 1994, MBEWG 2010), and the Birds of North America Online (Buehler 2000) and incorporated by reference. Additional information is included in the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP and MFWP 2011); and NatureServe databases (2011) and in the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (USFWS 2007).

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

In Montana, as elsewhere, the bald eagle is primarily a species of riparian and lacustrine habitats (forested areas along rivers and lakes), especially during the breeding season. Important year-round habitat includes: wetlands, major water bodies, spring spawning streams, ungulate winter ranges, and open water areas (MBEWG 1994).

Habitat for bald eagles on the Forest not only involves existing breeding areas (nest territories), but also suitable nesting habitat, and wintering and migration habitat as well. Nesting sites (both current nesting and suitable habitats) are generally located within larger forested areas near large lakes and rivers where nests are usually built in the tallest, oldest, large-diameter trees, primarily along the Kootenai, Clark Fork, and Pend Oreille River corridors and associated lakes and reservoirs. Nesting site selection is dependent upon maximum local food availability and minimum disturbance from human activity (Montana Bald Eagle Working Group 1994). The majority of their diet is comprised of fish. Important prey for bald eagles includes; waterfowl, especially in the winter, salmonids, suckers, whitefish, carrion, and small mammals and birds (MNHP and MFWP 2011).

Nearly all current nests on the Forest are located within one-quarter mile of, and overlook an adjacent water body. The Forest, in concurrence with the FWS, has mapped potential nesting habitat along all major river corridors and has maintained mature trees within those areas for current and future use by bald eagles. Suitable unused nesting habitat for bald eagles remains available throughout portions of the Forest and it is likely they will continue to expand. Both resident and seasonal winter use also occurs on the Forest.

### *Key Stressors Affecting the Species (Risks and Threats) – Indirect Effects*

Activities on NFS lands within bald eagle nest territories have the potential to impact eagles during the nesting period, depending on the type of activity and the distance of the activity from an active nest site. Although eagles construct and use nests in areas with ongoing activity, it is generally activities beyond those under which nests were constructed which have the potential to displace eagles. Based on Forest monitoring, the period in which activities have the greatest influence on nesting and rearing activities generally occurs between February 1 and July 15. Forest Service activities that may have direct or indirect impacts on bald eagles include timber harvest, road construction, prescribed fire, and fire suppression that could alter habitat or disturb nesting birds. Nest failure can also occur due to human disturbance from recreation or industrial activities, such as helicopter use or blasting.

Human activities near or within communal roost sites may prevent eagles from feeding or taking shelter, especially if there are no other undisturbed and productive feeding and roosting sites available (USFWS 2007). Activities that permanently alter communal roost sites and important foraging areas can altogether eliminate the elements that are essential for feeding and sheltering eagles (Ibid).

Stressors outside Forest Service control (cumulative effects) include pesticide use, persecution, private development of lands in nesting or foraging habitat, mortality related to other factors such as powerlines and collisions with vehicles, and the possible take of bald eagles allowed under the USFWS 2007 rule.



## Environmental Consequences – Bald Eagle

### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Nesting:** Nest sites are currently protected and managed according to the MBEMP and National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (2007). Management activities that could impact nesting habitat include prescribed fire, timber harvest, roads, and others. FW-GDL-WL-02 places timing restrictions and distance buffers around bald eagle nests that will reduce the chance of disturbance that would displace eagles or cause nest abandonment. FW-DC-WL-01, GDL-WL-03 and 04 will protect nest trees and maintain nest site habitat suitability. Other direction that will improve or maintain stand conditions and therefore nesting habitat includes: FW-DC-VEG-01 through 07, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-DC-FIRE-03, FW-DC-WL-06, FW-DC-WL-11 and 12, and much of the “Watershed, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section of the revised Forest Plan.

**Roosting/Foraging:** Under current management, roost and foraging areas are protected through the National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines (2007). Management activities can remove roosting habitat or cause disturbance that displaces bald eagles. FW-GDL-WL-02 places timing restrictions and distance buffers around bald eagle roosts that will reduce the chance of disturbance that would displace eagles. FW-GDL-WL-03 protects roost sites and reduces the chance of disturbance as well. Big game is a source of carrion in winter. Big game habitat will be maintained or improved through FW-DC-VEG-01 through 05, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11, FW-DC-FIRE-03, FW-DC-WL-16, FW-GDL-WL-08 through 11, GA-DC-WL-CLK-01 and 02, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02 and 03, WL-KOO-01 and 04, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetativon changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression has altered the pattern and availability of ungulate habitat, which in turn impacts the availability of carcasses for bald eagles to feed on. Recreational activities on NFS lands are the most likely to have had direct impacts on bald eagles on the Forest. Water impoundments on all ownerships have potentially altered the availability of prey (e.g., fish and waterfowl).

Climate change could impact bald eagles. It could change the duration and average temperature in winter. That could change how long ice lasts on some waterbodies. Therefore, access to water for foraging may change (i.e., a shift in seasonally available food sources, page 90 in USDA 2010). On the other hand, less severe winters in terms of cold and snow may lead to better survival for ungulates. That would reduce the number of carcasses available for eagles. Improvement or maintenance of ungulate habitat, including increased resiliency to large-scale disturbance processes, will be accomplished through FW-DC-VEG-01 through 05, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11, FW-DC-FIRE-03, FW-DC-WL-16, FW-GDL-WL-08 through 11, GA-DC-WL-

CLK-01 and 02, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01 and 04, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03. Direction that will improve or maintain the resiliency of nesting habitat to climate change includes FW-DC-VEG-01 through 07, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-DC-FIRE-03, FW-DC-WL-06, FW-DC-WL-11 and 12, and much of the “Watershed, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section of the revised Plan.

Disturbance associated with human presence and most management activities would likely continue. Subdivision of private property has the potential to alter or remove habitat for bald eagles and also ungulates (winter food for eagles).

Due to restrictions on pesticides, and reduced poaching, mortality on eagles has decreased.

Persecution, private development of lands in nesting or foraging habitat, mortality related to other factors such as powerlines and collisions with vehicles, and the possible take of bald eagles allowed under the USFWS 2007 rule can all impact bald eagles.

The action alternatives will contribute towards improving nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for bald eagles. This is due to returning conditions nearer to historic conditions, facilitating the development of large trees, and restoring habitat to a more sustainable and resilient condition for ungulates.

#### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for bald eagle. This determination is based in part on:

- FW-GDL-WL-02 set timing restrictions and distance buffers around nests and roosts in order to reduce effects from disturbance;
- Additional plan direction that will protect or maintain bald eagle habitat, or food availability, include: FW-DC-WL-01, FW-DC-WL-06, FW-DC-WL-11, FW-DC-WL-12, FW-GDL-WL-02 through 04, FW-GDL-WL-08 through 11; and
- Additionally, much of the direction in the “Watershed, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section of the revised Forest Plan will maintain or improve the aquatic resources that bald eagles rely upon.

#### *Bighorn Sheep - *Ovis canadensis**

##### **Affected Environment**

There are four bighorn sheep herds that occur on the KNF: Kootenai Falls (Kootenai Falls hunting district #100), Koocanusa/Ural-Tweed (Ural-Tweed #101), Ten Lakes (Galton Range #102), and Berray Mountain (Cabinet Mountains #123). Two of the herds, Koocanusa/Ural-Tweed and Ten Lakes, are native sheep (MFWP 2010).

Compared to elsewhere in Montana, sheep habitat in northwest Montana is dominated by timbered stands with shrub communities and very little grass-dominated communities. Historically this may have been different, but with active fire suppression over the last several decades, conifer encroachment has occurred on northwestern Montana sheep ranges. Historically under natural disturbance processes, sheep ranges were primarily ponderosa pine/bunchgrass communities (MFWP 2010).

The Forest was used for the analysis area, with more focus on those areas with known bighorn herds as listed above. In some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

### *Habitat and Life History*

Bighorn sheep habitat consists of mesic/xeric open habitats near escape terrain (cliffs, talus slopes). Elevational ranges of habitat can vary greatly, and sheep can be found from alpine areas to desert canyons throughout their range in western North America. Many of these open habitats, such as those found on the KNF, are fire adapted and maintained. Bighorn primarily feed on grass and forbs but will also eat shrubs as well. Winter ranges typically have low amounts of snow and are on south facing aspects (NatureServe 2011).

### *Key Stressors*

The primary risk factor for bighorns is all-age epizootic dieoffs, generally associated with interactions with domestic sheep (although domestic goats may also be carriers). This risk is greatly exacerbated by the fact that domestic and wild sheep are attracted to each other, and can actively seek each other out over great distances. A single bighorn visiting a domestic herd (including rams being drawn in by females in season) can then return to a wild herd and initiate an epizootic dieoff. A single domestic sheep seeking out a wild herd can bring about the same end. This contact could occur from domestic sheep on private lands, on trailing routes, from domestic sheep or goats being used for noxious weed treatment, or from pack goats (Tomasik 2011). No active or vacant domestic sheep or goat allotments occur on the KNF, nor are there any allotments adjacent to the KNF (see the map in the project record produced by the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, USDA and USDI 2012).

Stressors on Forest Service lands can include:

- Domestic sheep allotments (none on the KNF);
- Non-sheep livestock allotments;
- Domestic sheep trailing routes (none on the KNF);
- Noxious weeds;
- Fire/fire exclusion;
- Placing treatments that will attract bighorns between bighorns and domestic sheep or goats on non-NFS ownership;
- Use of domestic sheep or goats for weed treatment;
- Use of pack goats;
- Human disturbance (and associated dogs) in lambing and wintering habitat; and
- Motorized or nonmotorized routes in key habitat areas.

These stressors can lead to habitat alteration, disturbance/displacement of individual sheep, or even mortality.

## Environmental Consequences – Bighorn Sheep

### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Fire/Vegetation Management:** Active fire suppression over the last several decades has degraded bighorn sheep habitat by allowing conifer encroachment. Alternative A would be likely to result in continued active fire suppression. The action alternatives contain more flexibility to use fire to restore/maintain habitat conditions.

All three action alternatives trend vegetation conditions towards desired conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-05, FW-DC-VEG-10, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), which are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes. FW-DC-FIRE-03 will be particularly useful for restoring and maintaining bighorn sheep habitat. Trending towards these desired conditions will restore bighorn habitat across the KNF to a condition that bighorns would have found on the KNF historically under natural disturbance processes.

Vegetation conditions, under all action alternatives, will be maintained or improved for bighorn sheep in the long-term. The difference between the alternatives will be primarily how much vegetation treatment will be predicted each year to trend conditions toward the desired conditions for vegetation. Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A.

MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. These will be useful to maintain/restore bighorn sheep habitat in the long-term.

Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will be more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

The increased use of fire, both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions, will maintain or improve the pattern of bighorn habitat across the Forest. Managing for the desired conditions for vegetation (historic conditions) will likely result in a pattern of bighorn habitat similar to what was found historically under natural disturbance processes.

FW-DC-WL-16 states that habitat for native ungulates will be managed in coordination with the state and that cover will be managed according to the desired conditions for vegetation.

FW-DC-VEG-10 provides direction for the treatment of noxious weed infestations, and this will aid in preventing the degradation of bighorn habitat by noxious weeds. Other direction in the action alternatives that will maintain/restore bighorn habitat includes: GA-DC-WL-CLK-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01 and 04.

Connectivity of bighorn sheep habitat will be maintained or improved through not only the desired conditions for vegetation and fire, but also through FW-DC-WL-17, and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14.

Lands activities, such as the construction of utility corridors, could impact bighorn habitat within the footprint of that activity.

**Access/Disturbance:** Alternative A will retain the existing amount of recommended wilderness and non-motorized areas. Large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in security and connectivity of bighorn habitat. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres motorized, 1,812,700 acres over-snow motorized) will have the least acreage allowing motorized use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motorized, 1,918,400 acres over-snow motorized), A (1,677,200 acres motorized, 1,961,100 acres over-snow motorized), and D (1,792,900 acres motorized, 1,987,700 acres over-snow motorized). These acreages reflect what will remain open to over-snow vehicle use based on closure order issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan. The desired conditions for over-snow vehicle use will have that use allowed on 1,500,700 acres under Alternative C, followed by 1,713,000 acres under Alternative B Modified, and 1,859,100 acres under Alternative D. These are the acres where the MA desired conditions allows over-snow vehicle use. These acres reflect the intent for future closures, following site-specific winter travel management. In addition to the differences in MA allocations among the alternatives, the existing area closures on the Forest will be retained under all alternatives. All alternatives have the same acreage of wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres). MA1a does not allow over-snow motorized use.

The Access Amendment reduced road densities within grizzly bear habitat, and in some cases where bighorn sheep habitat overlaps grizzly habitat bighorn sheep will benefit from the lower likelihood of disturbance.

Disturbance can potentially occur during management activities, special uses, lands activities, mining activities, and the collection of forest products. Disturbance will be avoided or minimized through implementation of FW-DC-WL-01, FW-GDL-WL-08 and 09, and FW-GDL-WL-11. This includes on winter range and within lambing areas. GA direction will also limit disturbance on winter range: GA-DC-WL-CLK-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01, GA-DC-WL-LIB-03, and GA-DC-WL-TOB-06.

**Grazing:** No sheep/goat allotments currently exist on the KNF. Cattle allotments do exist on the KNF. FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will be done in a sustainable manner that protects resources. This will include sensitive species and their habitat, such as bighorn sheep. Implementation of this direction will maintain forage for bighorn sheep.

**Interaction with Domestic Sheep/Goats:** Under current management, no domestic sheep/goat grazing occurs on the KNF. There are no active or vacant allotments on the KNF or adjacent to the KNF that sheep from the KNF could encounter during a foray (see the map in the project record, USDA and USDI 2012). There is a very low likelihood of contact because of a lack of

overlap of bighorn sheep herds and domestic sheep allotments. Pack goats are rare on the KNF (M. Laws, personal communication, 2012) and the use of domestic goats for weed control currently does not occur on the KNF (D. Shotzberger, personal communication, 2012). Therefore, it is very unlikely that bighorn sheep will come into contact with domestic goats on KNF lands.

Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-GRZ-01 allows grazing to occur as long as vulnerable resources are protected. This direction will provide protection for bighorn sheep if domestic sheep grazing would be proposed in the future.

Bighorn sheep may interact with domestic sheep and goats on private lands adjacent to the KNF. Vegetation treatments that improve or maintain bighorn habitat on KNF lands have the potential to draw bighorn sheep closer to private lands with domestic sheep. FW-DC-WL-16 directs the KNF to coordinate with the state on the management of big game habitat, and this will provide a means to identify potential issues with KNF vegetation treatments drawing bighorn sheep near domestic sheep on private lands.

The Four Step Outline for conducting bighorn sheep viability analysis identified in the August 19, 2011 USDA Forest Service letter (Holtrop 2011, Weldon 2012) were used in this effects analysis. These steps include gathering the applicable data on bighorn range and domestic sheep allotments, assessing the overlap, assessing the likelihood of contact based on spatial and temporal overlap between allotments and bighorn sheep herds, and identifying management practices where necessary to separate domestic and bighorn sheep. The maps used in this analysis that showed domestic sheep allotments and bighorn sheep range were developed through a joint effort between the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Wild Sheep Working Group (Holtrop 2011, Weldon 2012).

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands, with more focus on those areas with existing herds. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression have potentially impacted the pattern of bighorn habitat on the Forest. Fire suppression in particular may have led to encroachment of conifers into bighorn foraging habitat or caused increased tree densities in previously open-canopied stands. Recreation may have also impacted bighorn in some locations by causing disturbance. The creation of Koocanusa Reservoir changed the availability of habitat along the river in that location.

Timber management is likely to continue on non-NFS ownerships. Their effects will depend on whether dry forest/open habitat that is outside of historic conditions is restored and the amount

of disturbance to bighorn sheep. The development of private land may also lead to habitat loss and disturbance.

If the climate becomes warmer, it will favor the vegetation conditions that bighorn prefer (open or dry forest habitats). Unfortunately, fire suppression has led to increased stand densities and ladder fuels. Active restoration may be useful to move towards the desired conditions for vegetation and historic conditions, making these stands more resilient and able to handle disturbance. The use of fire for restoration is the most useful tool rather than mechanical treatments due to the large acreages that can be improved or maintained with fire relatively cheaply. Changes in the snowpack may cause a change in bighorn use of winter range (page 92 in USDA 2010).

Disease transmission is the greatest threat to bighorn sheep. Domestic sheep grazing on other ownerships may expose bighorn sheep to disease and consequently spread it onto KNF lands. The state works with private landowners where the risk of transmission occurs and attempts to minimize the potential.

Grazing will continue on other ownerships, and if it reduces the availability of grasses and shrubs there may be a reduction in bighorn foraging habitat.

### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** of bighorn sheep. This determination is based in part on:

- Disturbance will be avoided or minimized through implementation of FW-DC-WL-01, FW-GDL-WL-08 and 09, and FW-GDL-WL-11. This includes on winter range and within lambing areas;
- No active/vacant sheep/goat allotments currently exist on the KNF. Cattle allotments do exist on the KNF. FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will be done in a sustainable manner that protects resources. This will include sensitive species and their habitat, such as bighorn sheep;
- All three action alternatives trend vegetation conditions towards desired conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-05, FW-DC-VEG-10, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), which are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes. FW-DC-FIRE-03 will be particularly useful for restoring and maintaining bighorn sheep habitat. Trending towards these desired conditions will restore bighorn habitat across the KNF to a condition that bighorns would have found on the KNF historically under natural disturbance processes; and
- GA directions that will improve or maintain bighorn sheep habitat through minimizing disturbance or improving the vegetation component of habitat include: GA-DC-WL-CLK-01 and 02, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01 and 04, GA-DC-WL-LIB-03, and GA-DC-WL-TOB-01.

### *Black-backed Woodpecker – *Picoides arcticus**

#### **Affected Environment**

Burned conifer forests and other insect infested forests provide key conditions necessary for both nesting and foraging for black-backed woodpeckers.

Black-backed woodpecker population biology, ecology, habitat description, and relationships are described in the Birds of North America Online (Dixon and Saab 2000), and incorporated by reference. Additional information is included in the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP and MFWP 2011), and NatureServe databases (2011) and in Partners in Flight bird Conservation Plan (PIF 2000).

In 2006 Samson completed “A conservation assessment of the northern goshawk, black-backed woodpecker, flammulated owl, and pileated woodpecker in the Northern Region, USDA Forest Service” and estimated the amounts of black-backed woodpecker habitat in the northern region, the Northern Rockies Ecoregion and for each of the Northern Region National Forests. Samson also developed habitat estimates for maintaining viable populations of each of these species including the black-backed woodpecker in Region 1 (Samson 2006). Bush and Lundberg (2008) provided an update of habitat estimates for the Region One Conservation Assessment.

Hoffman (1997 cited in Bonn et al. 2007) suggests that an analysis for species such as the black-backed woodpecker (such as viability analysis) should be conducted at the regional scale. This write-up discusses the black-backed woodpecker at both the regional scale as well as for the KNF.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes). The ERG analysis (ERG 2012) looked at vegetation changes over the next 50 years. Consideration was also given to a broader context for black-backed woodpeckers compared to some of the less mobile species due to their known ability to move great distances to recently burned habitat.

### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Wisdom et al. (2000) identify source habitats for black-backed woodpeckers as late seral multi- and single-layered stages of the subalpine, montane, and lower montane communities. They have a preference for dead and decaying trees for perching and foraging, and are highly associated with recent burns. Stand replacing large burns and other beetle infested stands provide high concentrations of prey (wood boring beetles) for black-backed woodpeckers (Koplin 1969 cited in Wisdom et al. 2000).

Black-backed woodpeckers are highly responsive to forest fire and other processes, such as spruce budworm outbreaks, that result in high concentrations of wood boring insects invading dead trees. Local and regional irruptions and range extensions have been observed in response to burns and wood borer outbreaks (Yunick 1985 in NatureServe 2011). In Montana, habitat includes early successional, burned forest of mixed conifer, lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and spruce-fir (Hutto 1995a, 1995b cited in MNHP and MFWP 2011) although they are more numerous in lower elevation Douglas-fir and pine forest habitats than in higher subalpine spruce forest habitats (Bock and Bock 1974 cited in MNHP and MFWP 2011). They appear to concentrate in recently burned forest and remain for several years (3 to 5) before leaving due to prey source decline (Harris 1982 cited in MNHP and MFWP 2011). Two post fire factors appear to be necessary for the black-backed woodpecker; nests found were in snags that had evidence of decay before the fire and a healthy number of snags before a fire is important.



Black-backed woodpeckers nest in live and dead trees of various species and often excavate a nest in sapwood, which decays more quickly than heartwood (Dixon and Saab 2000). The bulk of the diet of black-backed woodpeckers is wood-boring beetle larvae (including *Monochamus* spp. and Englemann spruce beetle, *Dendroctonus englamanni*), but they also feed on other insects (e.g., weevils, beetles, spiders, ants). Occasionally they will eat fruits, nuts, sap, and cambium. Foraging in western Montana was primarily by pecking, with scaling the next most common technique (MNHP and MFWP 2011). To provide plenty of wood-boring beetle grubs to feed their young, dead trees have to be plentiful and clumped close together. In between burns, black-backed woodpeckers disperse and must rely on stands of insect ridden trees for survival generally in late seral forests and riparian woodlands (Wisdom et al. 2000). Snags (ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine and larch) are a special habitat feature for black-backed woodpecker.

### *Habitat Estimates*

#### *Burned Forest/Insect and Disease Forests*

Samson (2006a) in his conservation assessment for the black-backed woodpecker found that there has been a significant increase in the amount of fire throughout Region 1 when he compared the amount of fire between two timeframes 1990-1993 (66,743 acres) and 2000-2003 (1,139,537 acres). On the KNF however, there was a substantial decrease in the acres of insect and disease between these two timeframes. During the mid to late 1970s and the 1980s the mountain pine beetle infested and killed a majority of the lodgepole pine on the Forest, with very large tracts of land that provided habitat for these species, and other woodpecker species as well, for a number of years.

Throughout the northern region (including the Forest) Samson (2006a) in his conservation assessment demonstrated that habitat for black-backed woodpecker is well distributed, well connected, and there are no gaps that would limit black-backed woodpecker movements.

Table 45 displays by decade the amount of acres burned on the KNF over the past several decades.

**Table 45. Estimated Acres Burned by Decade on the Forest**

Decade	Acres Burned
2000 - present	49,800
1990 - 1999	75,000
1980 - 1989	31,800
1970 - 1979	13,100

In each of the past three decades an abundance of habitat in the form of burned forest was available on the Forest. Between 2000 and 2007 approximately 37,248 acres of fire occurred on the KNF, with 20,182 in high severity and 17,066 in moderate severity that provided high quality habitat for these species prior to timber salvage. Only about 19 percent of the high severity and 8 percent of the moderate severity fire areas were harvested with large stands of burned forest retained for use by black-backed woodpeckers for several years. Based on Samson's (2006) analysis, the amount of burned forest present on the KNF over the past three decades exceeds the critical habitat threshold required for a minimum viable population of black-backed woodpecker (approximately 29,400 acres required for the regional population).

Black-backed woodpecker habitat was modeled by Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) in 2012 (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. Table 46 displays two of the relevant scenarios. The existing 1987 Forest Plan was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan into context. Both consider a warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes. Both of these scenarios also considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future and both considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads. Under both scenarios the acreage of black-backed woodpecker habitat is comparable to existing conditions after about five decades.

**Table 46. Acres of Black-backed Woodpecker Habitat**

Decade	1987 Forest Plan (acres)	No Treatment Scenario (acres)
0	29,582	29,582
1	6,368	7,208
2	11,526	12,195
5	24,049	23,340

Source: Ecosystem Research Group 2012. Both scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

#### *Late-Successional Forests*

Wisdom et al. (2000) identified that throughout the interior Columbia Basin there has been a widespread decline (but less severe than the strongest declines identified) in source habitats for species dependent on late-successional forest habitats present over broad elevations, which includes the black-backed woodpecker. Analysis conducted for the Forest (see vegetation write-up) also identified a fairly significant reduction in late-successional forest habitats, especially on the KNF. However, late-successional forest habitats are still considered to be well distributed across the Forest. In addition to current late-successional stands, the Forest is managing additional lands for their late-successional characteristics. The current trend is such that late-successional forests are no longer targeted for timber harvest. Over the short- and long-term natural succession will result in an increase in the amount of lands in the large size class and subsequently in the amount of late-successional forest components, such as snags and down wood.

#### *Snags*

A snag analysis recently conducted for the Forest (Bollenbacher et al. 2009) provided an estimate of the number of snags currently existing throughout the forested portion of the Forest. The analysis compared the amount of snags presently occurring in wilderness/roadless areas versus those outside wilderness/roadless areas. Results of the analysis identified that overall there is an abundance of snags available throughout the Forest to provide habitat for a number of bird species, including the black-backed woodpecker, during periods when burned habitat is not available. The analysis also identified however, that areas outside of wilderness/roadless areas have fewer snags per acre than those in wilderness/roadless areas. The snag densities within wilderness/roadless areas provide insight into natural snag abundance and distribution, and this can be compared to areas outside of wilderness/roadless (page 4 in Bollenbacher et al. 2009). Although there are fewer snags outside of wilderness/roadless areas, the 90 percent confidence intervals for wilderness/roadless area snags overlaps the mean snags/acre for all but the 15”+ dbh in areas outside of wilderness/roadless (table 2 in Bollenbacher et al. 2009). In other words, the

number of snags outside of wilderness/roadless areas, which represents natural snag abundance, is not very different than the number of snags outside of wilderness/roadless. Please see the snag discussion in the vegetation section of the FEIS and DEIS (pages 65-68 in the DEIS) for more information regarding the findings of Bollenbacher et al. (2009) and the amount of snags available on the Forest. As the amount of firewood adjacent to roads accessed by the public continues to diminish, access away from roads to patches of snags, especially in late-successional stands, has increased.

### *Key Stressors*

Fire suppression and postfire salvage logging are detrimental to this species.

The following Forest Service management activities may have had direct or indirect effects on black-backed woodpeckers or their habitats that resulted in habitat loss and/or displacement of individuals:

- Timber harvest (salvage logging);
- Fire suppression;
- Removal of fire killed or insect infested trees;
- Conversion of mature and late-successional forests to young stands with few decayed trees; and
- Human disturbance near nest sites (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks 2005).

Their strong association with dying or dead trees infested with beetles may be a key to black-backed woodpecker management. It is the conservation of specific forest seral stages (mainly mature and late-successional), therefore that may ultimately determine the baseline populations and viability of black-backed woodpeckers. Focusing only on burned areas as a management approach may jeopardize their long-term viability. Mature and late-successional forests containing patches of beetle infested trees may provide adequate habitat to support baseline populations of black-backed woodpeckers when burned areas are not available (Goggans et al. 1988). It is important to recognize that large scale disturbances may be more important in maintaining their populations now, than in historical times due to the reduction of all late-successional forests and the increase in “salvage” logging techniques which remove dying, and recently killed trees throughout North America (Ibid).

### **Environmental Consequences**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Timber Harvest/Salvage:** Fire creates habitat for black-backed woodpeckers. Fuels have accumulated due to fire suppression, and fires are more likely to create larger patches than under historic conditions due to the continuity of fuels. Under historic conditions and without fire suppression, patch sizes would likely have been smaller and there would have been a mosaic of stand ages; although, even under historic conditions large scale disturbance was possible (e.g., 1910 fires). Fuels reduction/burning (active restoration) and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will restore/maintain conditions nearer to historic conditions and make them more sustainable and resilient to large-scale disturbance. Instead of having large-scale disturbance and converting large acreages to black-backed woodpecker habitat in the short-term, smaller scale disturbances will create a mosaic of habitat conditions and allow for a continued supply of black-backed woodpecker habitat over time. FW-DC-WL-14 and FW-GDL-WL-05 will maintain habitat post-disturbance to provide for the habitat requirements of species

such as the black-backed woodpecker that rely on recently burned/disturbed forest. Use of natural, unplanned ignitions, implemented through FW-DC-FIRE-03, will be useful for maintaining burned habitat for black-backed woodpeckers over time.

Salvage logging reduces the amount of black-backed woodpecker habitat; however, adequate habitat will be retained for wildlife habitat as per FW-DC-TBR-01.

Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

Fire wood gathering will be facilitated by open roads, but due to tree density and topography it will be difficult for firewood gathers to cut snags very far off of a road. Although firewood gathering does result in a loss of snags, typically there are far more acres that are inaccessible to firewood gathers on the Forest that provides black-backed woodpecker habitat.

**Fire Suppression:** The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will have a much greater likelihood of maintaining or improving habitat pattern across the Forest. Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will be more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

In addition to FW-DC-FIRE-03, MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. Fire will be more likely to play a more natural role on more of the landscape under the action alternatives compared to Alternative A.

Black-backed woodpecker habitat was modeled by Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) in 2012 (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. Table 47 displays three of the relevant scenarios. The existing 1987 Forest Plan was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan into context. These scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes. These scenarios also considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future and considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads.

Under all alternatives the acreage of black-backed woodpecker habitat increases from decade 1 through decade 5. The lesser amount at decade 5 for Alternative B Modified is likely due to the anticipated success of management actions to reduce the severity of fire. ERG concluded that black-backed woodpeckers are at no risk region-wide. This conclusion is based on the ability of black-backed woodpeckers to migrate across forest boundaries to exploit wildfires and their genetic relatedness suggests that they readily do this. The KNF is expected to provide substantial burned forest habitat over time (page 83 in ERG 2012).

**Table 47. Acres of Black-backed Woodpecker Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified (acres)	1987 Forest Plan (acres)	No Treatment Scenario (acres)
0	29,582	29,582	29,582
1	7,121	6,368	7,208
2	11,225	11,526	12,195
5	17,766	24,049	23,340

Source: Ecosystem Research Group 2012. These scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

For black-backed woodpeckers, as with wildlife on the Forest in general, it is wildfire, insects/disease, in-growth, and stand succession that largely determines the amount and pattern of habitat on the Forest for this species rather than management activities (pages ES-1 and ES-2 in ERG 2012).

**Disturbance at Nests:** Most disturbances are likely to occur near roads due to the ease of human access. Alternative A will retain the existing amount of recommended wilderness and non-motorized areas. Large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in providing habitat for black-backed woodpeckers that will be relatively disturbance free. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres) will have the least acreage allowing motor vehicle use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motor vehicle use), A (1,677,200 acres motor vehicle use), and D (1,792,900 acres motor vehicle use). All alternatives have the same acreage of designated wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres).

FW-GDL-WL-21 sets timing restrictions and distance buffers around known nest sites of sensitive species using the best available information to reduce disturbance. FW-DC-WL-01 states that sensitive species nest sites are relatively free of human disturbance.

Recreation most often occurs near open roads, which is also the same area where firewood gathering will be most likely to occur. Recreation/human presence may cause disturbance that will cause black-backed woodpeckers to avoid the area, in particular near open roads. Disturbance due to firewood gathering could also cause them to avoid those areas. There will be bark beetle infested trees found away from roads on the Forest that will provide habitat for black-backed woodpeckers with less human presence.

Mining activities could reduce the amount of potential habitat, but the footprint will likely be small in comparison to the entire Forest. A mine will remove trees and therefore those trees will not have a chance to die in a fire or other disturbance. Until the mine site is reclaimed, there will not be any black-backed woodpecker habitat on that site. A haul/supply route could also remove trees, and if that route is open to the public it could increase firewood harvest along that road if it

is not an existing open road. Disturbance associated with the mine or haul/supply route may cause black-backed woodpeckers to avoid the area adjacent to the activities. Livestock management activities (e.g., fence building), special use permits, and the collection of forest products could all result in disturbance to black-backed woodpeckers. Suitable habitat is ephemeral, so activities that currently do not disturb black-backed woodpeckers may do so in the future if suitable habitat develops nearby. FW-GDL-WL-21 sets timing restrictions and distance buffers around known nest sites of sensitive species using the best available information to reduce disturbance. FW-DC-WL-01 states that sensitive species nest sites are relatively free of human disturbance.

Large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in providing habitat for black-backed woodpeckers that will be relatively disturbance free. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres motorized) will have the least acreage allowing motorized use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motorized), A (1,677,200 acres motorized), and D (1,792,900 acres motorized). All alternatives have the same acreage of wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres).

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past fire suppression and then salvage logging when fires did occur likely altered the availability and pattern of habitat for black-backed woodpeckers on the Forest.

Timber management and salvage logging are likely to continue on non-NFS ownerships. Stands burned on private lands are more likely to be salvaged logged than on the Forest. This will reduce the amount of habitat available following those disturbances.

Climate change could impact the amount and distribution of black-backed woodpecker habitat on the Forest. Combined with past fire suppression, climate change may lead to an increase in black-backed woodpecker habitat. This is because of the increased susceptibility to large-scale disturbance as more of the Forest moves outside of historic conditions. More, and larger, bark beetle outbreaks will provide a more abundant food source for black-backed woodpeckers. However, as bark-beetles decline in impacted stands after the first several years of an attack, the suitability of those stands as black-backed woodpecker habitat will decline over time following an outbreak. If these outbreaks are over a large-scale, then the long-term sustainability of black-backed woodpecker habitat may be impacted. If stands are restored nearer to historic conditions, and are more sustainable and resilient to large-scale disturbance, then disturbances will likely occur at smaller scales. That will provide a mosaic of stand conditions across the Forest and sustain a moving distribution of black-backed woodpecker habitat in the long-term. Highly

mobile species, such as the black-backed woodpecker, are able to respond better to climate change (page 91 in USDA 2010).

The action alternatives will contribute towards improving habitat for black-backed woodpeckers. This is due to returning conditions nearer to historic conditions, facilitating the development of smaller amounts of suitable habitat over time rather than one large influx of habitat due to a large-scale disturbance.

### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for black-backed woodpecker. This determination is based in part on:

- FW-DC-WL-14 and FW-GDL-WL-05 will maintain some burned, unlogged habitat for species such as black-backed woodpeckers. Other direction in the revised Forest Plan that maintains snag habitat includes: FW-DC-VEG-07, FW-GDL-VEG-04 and 05, and FW-DC-WL-12;
- The percentage of the Forest with high snag densities will increase over the next five decades;
- Use of natural, unplanned ignitions implemented through FW-DC-FIRE-03 and MA direction, will be useful for maintaining burned habitat for black-backed woodpeckers over time;
- The KNF is expected to provide substantial burned forest habitat over time (page 83 in ERG 2012);
- Salvage logging reduces the amount of black-backed woodpecker habitat; however, adequate habitat will be retained for wildlife habitat as per FW-DC-TBR-01; and
- Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives.

### *Common loon – *Gavia immer**

#### **Affected Environment**

Common loon population biology, ecology, habitat description, and relationships identified by research are described in Skaar (1990), Dolan (1994), Evers (2004) and Bissell (2005) and incorporated by reference. Sources of ecological and occurrence information is available from state agencies, Montana Natural Heritage Program, and Federal agencies that have developed shorebird and waterbird conservation plans.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan.

### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Successful nesting requires both nesting sites and nursery areas sheltered from winds and disturbances. In Montana common loons will generally not nest on lakes less than about 13 acres in size or over 5,000 feet in elevation (Skaar 1990 in PIF 2000). If nesting on a small lake, they may use an adjacent lake for supplementary foraging (Ibid). Small islands (preferred) or

herbaceous shoreline areas are selected for nesting and sheltered shallow coves with abundant insects and small fish are used as nursery areas (Skaar 1990 in PIF 2000). Most lakes inhabited by loons are relatively oligotrophic and have not experienced significant siltation or other hydrological changes. During migration a wide variety of open water habitats are used, but larger lakes and rivers are preferred (PIF 2000).

Water quality is an important habitat feature for breeding loon success. Loons are visual predators; therefore, clear water is crucial for foraging efficiency. Loons nest in close proximity to the water's edge and prefer small islands, floating bog mats, and marshy hummocks (Evers 2004). Nest sites are generally located within 4 feet of the water's edge and sites are selected that provide shelter from wind, cover, view of open water, and near a drop off steep enough for underwater approach. Once the eggs have hatched and the young are ready to leave the nest, the family moves to a nursery area, a shallow water area protected from wind, waves, and other loons. Loons feed mostly on small fish such as yellow perch and various minnow species. Other aquatic organisms may also be consumed.

Because disturbance of nesting pairs is one of the major stressors of loons, land ownership around nesting lakes is considered important, and is a primary factor in the management opportunities available for this species. Fifty four of 72 currently used nesting lakes (75%) in Montana are bordered by public land, although private landowners taken as a whole own land on the greatest number of lakes (39). Of the 38 lakes on the KNF with known or suspected loon nesting, only 16 are wholly or partially on NFS lands. It is likely that development around many of these lakes will continue in the future and potentially impact loon nesting and rearing activities. NFS lands provide access to several lakes with loon nesting activity, generally in the form of recreation sites, such as campgrounds and boat access sites.

#### *Key Stressors to the Species (Risks and Threats)*

Evers (2004) and NatureServe (2011) identified the following threats to common loons considered to be outside the control of the forest. These may also cause mortality, nest abandonment, or displacement:

- Direct anthropogenic take – (illegal take through hunting). Subsistence hunting is still common and practiced across Alaska, northern Canada, and Greenland;
- Commercial fishing activities – incidentally caught in nets by commercial and tribal fishing interests;
- Environmental pollutants such as – marine oil spills, contaminants (mercury, lead, organic pollutants), acid rain;
- Diseases and parasites – botulism, aspergillosis, and other diseases;
- Reservoir management – water level fluctuation;
- Emaciation syndrome – a regular mortality problem for wintering loons and may be one of the greatest threats to common loons; and
- Nest predation.

The following stressors may also cause mortality, nest abandonment, or displacement.

Common loons are vulnerable to habitat loss and/or degradation on both breeding and wintering grounds. Major threats to loons are disturbances to nesting pairs caused by recreational activities, habitat loss due to shoreline development, and water pollution (Evers 2004, NatureServe 2011, and PIF 2000). Human recreational use of nesting and nursery sites may force loons into



marginal, less protected nesting sites where chicks are more susceptible to predation when forced to separate from their parents by boats, jet skis, or any human intrusion. Chicks are also killed by direct impact from outboard propellers and more often jet skis (McIntyre and Barr 1997 in IDFG 2005).

Water quality degradation from point sources such as faulty septic systems, or more generally from road building, timber harvest, or other activities near nesting lakes also has the potential to change prey populations and vegetation patterns at nesting lakes. Resultant changes in nest site suitability or nest success may occur. Manipulation of water levels can also reduce the suitability of lakes and reservoirs as feeding or nesting sites.

Montana Partners in Flight (PIF 2000) identify that minimization of development and recreation activities on known nesting lakes, at least during useful portions of the breeding cycle, is perhaps the best means of managing loon habitat, specifically in northwest Montana. Posting of nesting or nursery lakes most susceptible to disturbance has been shown to be effective.

Activities on national forest lands that may impact common loons include; water level fluctuations, human disturbance of nest sites, development, and access. The majority of the lakes used by these species are situated on private lands or managed by other federal (waterfowl production areas and refuges managed by USFWS) or state agencies. There are occasions however, where Forest Service lands may occur adjacent to these open water systems and may indirectly affect species by providing access and/or resulting in disturbance.

### **Environmental Consequences – Common Loon**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Disturbance:** Disturbance effects are the most likely to occur on NFS lands or be facilitated by access through NFS lands. Some lakes that have loons are adjacent to private or state lands, and most disturbances are likely to come from the private lands/residences. NFS roads, campgrounds, and boat ramps that facilitate access to lakes with loons can contribute to disturbance as well. Lakes tend to be popular recreation destinations, so on lakes with mixed ownerships disturbance will be likely.

Lakes where disturbance of loons was considered a problem under current management, in coordination with the state, restrictions on motorized use have been put in place. FW-GDL-WL-20 provides direction to avoid or minimize disturbance near nests, and FW-DC-WL-01 states that sensitive species nest sites are relatively free of human disturbance. FW-DC-WL-10 states that aquatic/riparian species find a mosaic of aquatic and riparian habitats and a low level of disturbance exists in these areas. Special uses that occur on or adjacent to lakes may cause disturbance to loons. Minerals development that may occur adjacent to lakes may disturb loons and cause them to avoid the area. Additionally, any haul/supply route that passes a lake and greatly increases noise and traffic may add to disturbance to loons. Disturbance caused by the collection of forest products will not likely be great. For disturbance to occur it would require people to be immediately adjacent to a section of lake that a loon was using. It would be relatively rare for this to occur, but if it did, loons may temporarily shift their use to another part of the lake.

Fire may cause some disturbance to loons due to smoke, but the most impactful disturbance may be associated with fire suppression activities. Helicopters in particular, either flying low over a lake or dipping water, can cause disturbance to loons. Fire suppression has led to a buildup of fuels, and fuels reduction activities in close proximity to lakes with loons can potentially cause

disturbance. Lakes with private residences around them are the most likely to have active fire suppression in order to protect the private property and people.

Timber harvest that includes helicopter logging would be the most likely to disturb loons. FW-DC-WL-01, FW-DC-WL-10, and FW-GDL-WL-20 will minimize disturbance.

A trend towards the desired conditions for vegetation may improve habitat conditions for loons by reducing the duration and intensity of smoke during a fire. Moving towards historic conditions, reducing fuels, and making stands more resilient to large-scale disturbance may increase the frequency of smoke exposure, but will decrease the likelihood of a large, stand-replacing fire. Smaller, more frequent burns will be more likely on drier sites.

**Water Levels:** INFISH guides current management of aquatic/riparian resources and has been incorporated into the revised Forest Plan. Much of the direction in the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section of the revised Forest Plan will aid in maintaining water levels and quality and will therefore maintain or improve loon habitat. Climate and annual precipitation primarily determine water levels on lakes adjacent to NFS lands, but they can also be determined by water uses that are outside the control of the Forest Service (e.g., irrigation, hydro-power). The Forest Service may, in some cases, have little control over water levels on lakes that are not completely managed by the Forest Service.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan.

Recreational activities are the most likely activity to have caused disturbance or impacted loons on NFS lands. Information/education efforts have been utilized to limit those effects.

Timber management, including helicopter logging, may continue on non-NFS ownerships. If done near a lake, disturbance to loons could result.

Fuels reduction/timber sale efforts are possible on all land ownerships, in particular where they are near residences. If these are done near lakes with loons this could lead to disturbance.

Climate change could affect loons through changes in water levels, temperatures, and vegetation. If climate change alters precipitation and spring melt, water levels may fluctuate more in the spring during nesting than they may have previously. This may impact nesting if nests become submerged or become elevated as the water level decreases. Water temperatures may impact the suitability of lakes for different fish species, thereby changing prey abundance. Aquatic vegetation, important for nests, may change locations in a lake due to water level fluctuations, and this may change nest site availability. This changing phenology is one of the consequences of climate change for migratory birds (page 90 in USDA 2010).

Recreation is likely to increase on all land ownership types, if for no other reason than human population growth. This would increase human disturbance and potentially impact lake habitat on all ownerships.

Loons may be directly killed by illegal hunting, subsistence hunting in Canada, or getting caught in commercial fishing nets on their wintering waters. Environmental pollutants can kill loons through lead or mercury poisoning and marine oil spills. Habitat can be degraded through pollution, including impacts on loon prey and consequently displacing loons. Land use activities near waterbodies that support nesting loons can contribute pollution, such as faulty septic systems.

Diseases and parasites (botulism, aspergillosis, and other diseases), and emaciation syndrome, can cause mortality to loons and impact the population. Nest predation, or predation on juveniles when they become separated from adults, also can impact a population.

Reservoir management can cause water level fluctuation and consequently nest failure. Shoreline development increases disturbance and can degrade habitat. Because loons are susceptible to disturbance, increases in recreation can cause displacement, nest abandonment, or direct mortality. The action alternatives will contribute towards improving or maintaining habitat for loons. FW-GDL-WL-20 provides direction to avoid or minimize disturbance from Forest Service activities near nests.

### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for common loon. This determination is based in part on:

- FW-GDL-WL-20 provides direction to avoid or minimize disturbance near nests, and FW-DC-WL-01 states that sensitive species nest sites are relatively free of human disturbance. FW-DC-WL-10 states that aquatic/riparian species find a mosaic of aquatic and riparian habitats and a low level of disturbance exists in these areas. This direction works best where lakes are completely surrounded by NFS lands; and
- Much of the direction in the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section of the revised Forest Plan will aid in maintaining water levels and quality and will therefore maintain or improve loon habitat.

### *Fisher – Martes pennanti*

#### **Affected Environment**

The fisher is one of a group of carnivores that occur on the Forest. Carnivores are important indicators of ecosystem integrity in that they influence the structure and reflect the vigor of the trophic levels upon which they depend. Information on carnivore conservation and management is discussed in Witmer et al. (1998) for the Interior Columbia Basin. Several carnivores in the western United States have declined dramatically in the last century and a half and are listed as threatened or endangered species or are considered sensitive by land management agencies (Noss et al. 1996, cited in Witmer et al. 1998). These species are mostly far ranging, elusive, shy and inconspicuous, occur in low densities and are active mainly at night (Kucera and Zielinski 1995). Many of these species tend to be wilderness-oriented, are largely intolerant of human activities, and have large spatial requirements. Therefore, the key common feature appears to be remote and secure habitats.

Fisher population ecology, biology, habitat description, and relationships identified by research are described in Powell and Zielinski (1994), Heinemeyer and Jones (1994), Rugierro et al. (1994) and Vinkey (2003). That information is incorporated by reference. Additional information is found in the Montana Natural Heritage Program, Idaho Data Conservation Center and NatureServe databases. Additional research and data collection are in progress by the researchers and state agencies elsewhere in Montana and Idaho. Information on fisher augmentation/introduction is described by Vinkey (2003). Information on source habitats is described in Wisdom et al. (2000).

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes). The ERG analysis (ERG 2012) looked at vegetation changes over the next 50 years.

### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Fishers are a rare predator found in mature to late-successional forests with high canopy closure and large tree (both live and dead) structure. They avoid large openings. Natal dens have been located in pileated woodpecker cavities (Aubry and Raley 2002) and other forest structures. Fishers are found in forested habitats that display extensive physical structure, including snags for dens, multilayered canopies to protect against predation, down logs for denning and resting (Aubry 2005, Powell and Zielinski 1994, Wisdom et al. 2000), and coarse woody debris to provide prey (Douglas and Strickland 1987, Buskirk and Powell 1994, Powell and Zielinski 1994, all cited in Vinkey 2003). Moist forested habitats with continuous overhead cover and riparian zones are frequently utilized (Arthur et al. 1989, Jones 1991, Weir 1995 all cited in Vinkey 2003) and stream courses may be used as travel corridors (IDFG 2005).

Fishers hunt for prey on the forest floor and in trees and snags (Spahr et al. 1991). Fisher are noted for their ability to prey on porcupines; however, their list of prey species is extensive including numerous small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, bird eggs, fish, and fruit (Heinemeyer and Jones 1994; pages 7-8). Major winter foods include carrion, snowshoe hare, mice, and voles.

Vegetation management and fire suppression have influenced habitat of this species and its prey by altering composition and structure. High quality habitats for the fisher, unlike that for grizzly bear, are not strongly associated with low levels of human population and roads (Carroll et al. 2001).

### *Habitat Estimates*

Estimates of the amount of habitat currently available for the fisher (Bush and Lundberg 2008) in the northern region (Samson 2006a), show that habitat is abundant and well distributed across the Northern Region by Ecological Province and National Forest. Habitat estimates for the Northern Region, the Northern Rocky Mountain Ecological Province (which includes the Forest) (Bush and Lundberg 2008) are shown in the table 48.

**Table 48. Habitat Estimates for Fisher (acres)**

	<b>Region 1</b>	<b>Northern Rocky Mountain Ecological Province</b>
Winter Habitat	6,251,386	4,043,154
Summer Habitat	2,293,408	1,526,712

Fisher habitat was modeled by Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) in 2012 (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. Table 49 displays two of the relevant scenarios. The existing 1987 Forest Plan was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan into context. Both consider a warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes. Both of these scenarios also considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future and both considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads. Over the next five decades wildfire and root disease are the expected causes of the decline in fisher habitat availability. Even though habitat declines, it remains within HRV and there is no indication that fisher viability is at risk (page 85 in ERG 2012).

**Table 49. Acres of Fisher Habitat**

Decade	1987 Forest Plan (acres)	No Treatment Scenario (acres)
0	703,423	703,423
1	490,732	500,822
2	422,852	430,347
5	453,621	460,835

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Both scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

#### *Habitat Threshold*

Samson (2006a) in his conservation assessment estimated the critical habitat threshold for a minimum viable population of fisher for the Northern Region. For his assessment Samson estimated that the amount of habitat needed for a minimum viable population of fisher is 100,077 acres (approximately 405 km<sup>2</sup>). Based on an estimate of the amount of habitat available (Bush and Lundberg 2008), the Northern Region (2,293,408 acres) easily provides enough habitat to support a minimum viable population of fisher. In fact, habitat estimates (Bush and Lundberg 2008) identify that habitat in the Northern Rocky Mountain Ecological Province and in 8 of the 12 National Forests in the Northern Region (including the Kootenai) exceed the amount of habitat needed to support a minimum viable population of fisher.

#### *Key Stressors (Risks and Threats) Affecting the Fisher*

The following Forest Service management activities may have direct or indirect effects on forested and riparian habitats:

- Timber Harvest – changes in mature and late-successional forest stand composition and structure affecting canopy cover and the amount and availability of large down wood; and
- Fire (both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) – removal of standing snags and down wood, reduction of canopy coverage, or direct mortality.

Stressors to this species group that are outside the control of Forest Service management may include (cumulative effects):

- Global warming (climate change) – increased and prolonged summer temperatures and/or drought conditions, and/or the increased risk of fire that may impact forest cover and down wood;

- Private land development – developments to support increased human populations that may impact suitable forest cover on non-public lands, and impact connectivity between public lands;
- Over-harvesting by trappers – both allowable and incidental trapping with marten traps may be an important source of mortality, particularly where populations are small and fragmented (cumulative effect);
- Habitat loss and degradation – loss of forested habitat, particularly late-successional forests, to fire and timber harvest results in the reduction and fragmentation of suitable habitat. Loss of habitat cover and structure near streams, loss of down and woody material near streams; and
- Small, isolated populations – may lose genetic diversity and have a higher probability of extinction. It is unknown if a sufficient number of individuals exist to sustain the populations across the full range of environmental and demographic stochasticity (Vinkey 2003) (cumulative effect).

Stressors may cause loss of habitat, displacement, or mortality.

### **Environmental Consequences – Fisher**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Timber Harvest/Fire:** Fishers evolved to use a habitat that tends to have stand-replacing disturbance due to the dense nature of the stands and large amount of fuels. The likelihood of a large, stand-replacing disturbance will be greater today due to fire suppression increasing stand densities and fuels, in particular on drier sites. Trending towards the desired conditions for vegetation will return stands nearer to historic conditions and enable them to be more sustainable and resilient to large-scale, stand replacing disturbance. This will improve and maintain fisher habitat in a distribution and amounts better approximating what would have been present under natural disturbance processes. There will be a lower likelihood of a stand-replacing event starting in the lower elevation, drier forests, and carrying into the moist forest types (fisher habitat).

Timber harvest designed to move toward the desired conditions for vegetation and historic conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 09, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03) will aid in maintaining fisher habitat in a sustainable and resilient condition. FW-DC-VEG-07 and 08, FW-GDL-VEG-03 through 06, FW-DC-WL-12 and 13 will retain snags and downed wood that are important to fishers in a distribution and quantity nearer to what will have been present under natural disturbance processes. Timber harvest may cause disturbance to fishers and lead them to at least temporarily avoid the areas adjacent to logging activities. FW-GDL-WL-21 will protect den sites with timing restrictions and distance buffers.

Fisher habitat was modeled by Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) in 2012 (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. Table 50 displays some of the relevant scenarios. The existing 1987 Forest Plan was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario, where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan into context. A warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes was considered. Scenarios also considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future and considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads. Over the next five decades wildfire and root disease are the expected causes of the decline in fisher habitat availability. Even though habitat declines, it remains within HRV for the alternatives and there is no indication that fisher

viability is at risk (page 85 in ERG 2012). The other alternatives are similar to Alternative B Modified.

**Table 50. Acres of Fisher Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified	1987 Forest Plan (acres)	No Treatment Scenario (acres)
0	703,423	703,423	703,423
1	497,631	490,732	500,822
2	447,004	422,852	430,347
5	522,938	453,621	460,835

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

For fisher, as with wildlife on the Forest in general, it is wildfire, insects/disease, in-growth, and stand succession that largely determines the amount and pattern of habitat on the Forest for this species rather than management activities (pages ES-1 and ES-2 in ERG 2012).

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression have intermixed to result in the amount and pattern of fisher habitat on NFS lands. Overall, the amount of habitat on the Forest is above HRV (pages 84-85 in ERG (2012)). Some disturbance may have occurred to individual fishers during project activities or by recreational activities.

Timber management is likely to continue on non-NFS ownerships. If done in moist forest types with dense canopies, then fisher habitat may be altered. Snags and downed wood may be reduced, particularly on private lands. The focus on private lands may not be on restoration, historic conditions, and creating resilient stands, but on monetary factors.

Climate change is likely to alter the distribution and extent of fisher habitat. A warmer climate will reduce the extent of dense, closed canopy forest. Those stands will be more susceptible to large-scale, stand replacing disturbance like fire or insects. Both may at least temporarily increase the amount of snags and downed wood until the next fire, but there will be an open canopy and the stands will not be suitable for fisher. Distributional shifts are one way species respond to climate change (page 90 in USDA 2010).

Trapping mortality, both legal and incidental (martens trapping), can contribute to population declines or prevent a population from increasing.

### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for fisher. The determination is based in part on:

- Both snags and the large/very large size class increase under all alternatives;
- FW-DC-VEG-07 and 08, FW-GDL-VEG-03 through 06, FW-DC-WL-12 and 13 will retain snags and downed wood that are important to fishers;
- A trend towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 09, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03) will change the distribution and amount of fisher habitat nearer to what will have been present under natural disturbance processes;
- Even though habitat declines, it remains within HRV for the alternatives and there's no indication that fisher viability is at risk (page 85 in ERG 2012). The decline is driven by root disease and fire; and
- Geographic Area direction that improves or maintains connectivity includes: GA-DC-WL-BUL-01, GA-DC-WL-CLK-03, GA-DC-WL-FSH-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-02, GA-DC-WL-LIB-01, GA-DC-WL-TOB-02, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-01. Additionally, FW-DC-WL-17, and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14 also maintain connectivity.

### *Flammulated owl – *Otus flammeolus**

#### **Affected Environment**

Flammulated owl population biology, ecology, habitat description, and relationships identified by research are described in the birds of North America Online (McCallum 1994), Groves et al. (1997), Hayward and Verner (1994) and Samson (2006a, 2006b) and incorporated by reference. Additional information is provided in the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP), Idaho Data Conservation Center and NatureServe databases and in COSEWIC (2001). Formal surveys were conducted throughout the region, including the Forest, by the Avian Science Center (Smucker and Cilimburg 2008) and for several years by Forest representatives using protocol developed by the MNHP (included in the Forest files).

Samson (2006a) completed “A conservation assessment of the northern goshawk, black-backed woodpecker, flammulated owl, and pileated woodpecker in the Northern Region, USDA Forest Service” and estimated the amount and distribution of flammulated owl habitat in Region One and for each of the Northern Region National Forests. Samson (2006b) also developed habitat estimates for maintaining viable populations of flammulated owl in Region One. Bush and Lundberg (2008) provided an update of habitat estimates for the Region One Conservation Assessment.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes). The ERG analysis (ERG 2012) looked at vegetation changes over the next 50 years.



### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

McCallum (1994) and Hayward and Verner (1994) provide substantive reviews of flammulated owl habitat, behavior, and general ecology. Breeding habitat is primarily ponderosa pine or forest with similar characteristics (i.e., dry montane coniferous forest or aspen forests, with brushy understory or open grasslands nearby). The preferred breeding habitat hosts a high diversity or abundance of nocturnal arthropods (mainly insects). Prey availability appears to be the primary factor for migration and patterns in migration and winter habitat requirements are poorly known.

Wisdom et al. (2000) identify source habitats as late-seral multi- and single-layered stages of the montane community group. Source habitats also include unmanaged young forests that contain sufficient large diameter snags and logs needed for various life functions for the species. Late-successional forests of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir seem to be the key components of flammulated owl home ranges (Reynolds and Linkhart 1992 cited in Wisdom et al. 2000). Variability in the structure of these late-successional stands seems important to support life functions of flammulated owls. Roosting occurs in fairly dense stands, whereas relatively open stands seem to be selected for foraging (Linkhart 1984 cited in Wisdom et al. 2000) and open mature stands are selected for nest sites (McCallum 1994). Flammulated owls nest in cavities in both snags and large live trees, (Bull et al. 1990 cited in Wisdom et al. 2000). Flammulated owls have been known to nest in cavities excavated by pileated woodpeckers (Aubry and Raley, 2002). In two Oregon studies mean dbh of nest trees were 22.2 inches (Goggans 1986) and 28.4 inches (Bull et al. 1990) both cited in Wisdom et al. (2000).

Nesting and foraging habitat for this species has been identified as mature to late-successional ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir stands. Within these stands this owl nests in cavities excavated by woodpeckers, especially larger woodpeckers such as the pileated woodpecker. Mature ponderosa pine stands also serve as foraging habitat. The stands support high numbers of prey (insects) and their open nature is compatible with the owl's hunting strategy of capturing insects in flight. Roosting habitat or areas where individual flammulated owls spend the day resting, has been identified as dense, mixed conifer stands (Ibid).

### *Habitat estimates*

Estimates of the amount of habitat currently available for the flammulated owl (Bush and Lundberg 2008) in the northern region (Samson 2006a), show that habitat is abundant and well distributed across the Northern Region by Ecological Province and National Forest. Habitat estimates for the Northern Region, the Northern Rocky Mountain Ecological Province (which includes the Forest) are displayed in table 51 (Bush and Lundberg 2008).

**Table 51. Estimated Habitat for Flammulated Owl (acres)**

	Region One	Northern Rocky Mountain Ecological Province
Habitat	184,952	105,290

Flammulated owl habitat was modeled by Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) in 2012 (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. Table 52 displays two of the relevant scenarios. The existing 1987 Forest Plan was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario, where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan into context. Both consider a warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes. Both of these scenarios also

considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future and both considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads.

**Table 52. Acres of Flammulated Owl Habitat**

Decade	1987 Forest Plan		No Treatment Scenario	
	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat
0	23,984	72,265	23,984	72,265
1	27,311	81,336	27,997	89,735
2	19,284	100,466	20,046	112,533
5	30,681	132,111	34,064	133,051

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Both scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

"Actual" habitat are those acres expected to exist at a particular point in time. "Potential" habitat is those acres that don't quite meet all the criteria of being habitat at a particular point in time, but are on the trajectory to become "actual" habitat

#### *Habitat Threshold*

Samson (2006a) in his conservation assessment estimated the critical habitat threshold for a minimum viable population of flammulated owls for the Northern Region. For his assessment Samson estimated that the amount of habitat needed for a minimum viable population of flammulated owls is 4,700 acres (approximately 19 mi<sup>2</sup>). Based on the estimate of the current amount of habitat available (Bush and Lundberg 2008) displayed in table 51 above, the Northern Region provides more than enough habitat to support a minimum viable population of flammulated owls. In fact, habitat estimates (Bush and Lundberg 2008) for the Northern Rocky Mountain Ecological Province and for 11 of the 12 National Forests in the Northern Region (including the Kootenai) exceed that required to support a minimum viable population of flammulated owls.

#### *Large Size Class/Late-Successional Forest*

Wisdom et al. (2000) identified that there has been a strong decline in source habitats throughout the Interior Columbia Basin for species dependent on late-successional forest habitats present over broad elevations which include the flammulated owl. Analysis of late-successional and/or the large size class on the Forest (see vegetation write-up in this EIS) has also identified that there has been a fairly significant reduction in the amount of late-successional forests and stands in the large size class. However, late-successional forests are still considered to be well distributed across the Forest. In addition to current late-successional stands, the Forest is managing additional lands for their late-successional forest characteristics, such as large trees. The current trend is such that late-successional forests are no longer targeted for timber harvest and there is an increase in the number of large diameter trees retained in areas of vegetation management. Over the short- and long-term natural vegetation succession will result in an increase in the amount of lands in the large size class and subsequently in the amount of late-successional forest components, such as snags, and down wood important for these species.

#### *Snags*

A snag analysis recently conducted for the Forest (Bollenbacher et al. 2009) provides an estimate of the number of snags currently existing throughout the forested portion of the Forest. The analysis compared the amount of snags in wilderness/roadless areas versus those outside wilderness/roadless areas. The analysis identified that areas outside of wilderness/roadless areas have fewer snags per acre than those in wilderness/roadless areas. The snag densities within

wilderness/roadless areas provide insight into natural snag abundance and distribution, and this can be compared to areas outside of wilderness/roadless (page 4 in Bollenbacher et al. 2009). Although there are fewer snags outside of wilderness/roadless areas, the 90 percent confidence intervals for wilderness/roadless area snags overlaps the mean snags/acre for all but the 15”+ dbh in areas outside of wilderness/roadless (table 2 in Bollenbacher et al. 2009). In other words, the number of snags outside of wilderness/roadless areas, which represents natural snag abundance, is not very different than the number of snags outside of wilderness/roadless. Please see the snag discussion in the “Vegetation” section of the FEIS and DEIS (pages 65-68 in the DEIS) for more information regarding the findings of Bollenbacher et al. 2009 and the amount of snags available on the Forest.

It appears very likely that the flammulated owl distribution has not contracted in North America (McCallum 1994). Available evidence, all of which is circumstantial, suggests that the North American distribution of the species has not changed since the first specimen was obtained in 1860 (Ibid). Habitat loss from logging, fire suppression, and type conversions make it likely that owl numbers have decreased in the last century; however, there is no reliable evidence that the flammulated owl abundance has changed anywhere in North America (Ibid). Loss of winter habitat, presumably in southern Mexico, through logging, adds to the likelihood that owl numbers have decreased. The bottom line is that it is not known whether flammulated owl populations are secure or declining, but the species currently occupies all of its known range in what appears to be good numbers (Ibid).

Habitat for the flammulated owl has and will continue to decline due in part to fire suppression (PIF 2000). Virtually every author working with the flammulated owl suggests fire suppression has been a negative influence on habitat (Ibid). Fire suppression permits young Douglas-fir trees to suppress the recruitment of shade intolerant and large diameter trees important to the flammulated owl and to reduce the amount of open understory needed by the owl as foraging areas. Whether enough fire can be introduced is unknown, and mechanical removal of understory may serve as an effective alternative to fire (Ibid).

#### *Key Stressors Affecting the Flammulated Owl*

Stressors outside Forest Service control include:

- The private development of montane forests;
- Avian predators (great horned owl, northern goshawk, cooper's hawk);
- Loss of dry conifer forests on wintering grounds;
- Threats associated with migration and while in wintering habitat; and
- Decline in riparian habitats.

The following Forest Service management activities may have direct or indirect effects on snags and cavity habitat (McCallum 1994, Groves et al. 1997b cited in IDFG 2005):

- Fire (both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) – removal of standing snags and down wood or direct mortality;
- Road maintenance and construction – habitat loss and loss/reduction in secure habitat;
- Recreational use – habitat loss or disturbance during use in sensitive habitats;

- Fire suppression – the main effect has been to decrease ponderosa pine regeneration (decreased breeding habitat for owls) but increase Douglas-fir thickets (which provide security cover from predators);
- Human disturbance – during breeding, nesting and rearing periods (Taylor and Knight 2003) (May through July);
- Selective cutting trees – for firewood can alter breeding habitat structure and have adverse effects on nesting owls, especially between May and August when nest trees may be removed;
- Loss of mature and late-successional dry pine forest and the reduced numbers of snags, particularly large snags;
- Decline in late-successional forests of cottonwood and aspen;
- Decline in availability of large snags and trees for foraging and nesting;
- Any action that removes deciduous trees and snags from riparian areas and aspen stands;
- Declines in shrub understories of montane and lower montane forests;
- Fragmentation of late-successional forest habitat;
- Loss of down wood;
- Use of herbicides and pesticides in forests may negatively affect non-target species such as moths on which flammulated owls and Lewis's woodpecker depend for food;
- Selective timber harvesting with subsequent replanting of closely spaced seedlings; and
- Intensive grazing that may remove the shrub and grass understory.

These stressors may result in habitat loss, displacement, nest failure, or mortality.

### **Environmental Consequences – Flammulated Owl**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Fire/Vegetation Management:** Fire suppression has reduced habitat quality for flammulated owls. It has increased encroachment by shade-tolerant conifers, created a dense understory and eliminated foraging habitat, and retarded the development of large ponderosa pine that are useful for large snags and nesting cavities. The increase in fuels puts the existing large ponderosa pine at an increased risk of being lost in a stand-replacing event. Alternative A will be more likely to continue the active suppression of most fires. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire to restore/maintain habitat.

Fuels reduction, in particular when done to trend towards the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), will improve or maintain flammulated owl habitat. Expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions through FW-DC-FIRE-03 will be useful for maintaining and improving flammulated owl habitat.

FW-STD-VEG-01, FW-GDL-VEG-01 and 02, FW-GDL-VEG-04 and FW-GDL-VEG-05, FW-DC-WL-09, FW-DC-WL-10, FW-DC-WL-11, FW-DC-WL-12 move habitat conditions towards historic conditions, make stands more resilient to disturbance, and maintain or improve snag habitat.

By moving towards the desired conditions for vegetation, the amount and distribution of flammulated owl habitat will approximate what would have been present under natural disturbance processes. Drier forests, which are the most likely to be outside of historic conditions due to fire suppression, will be more resilient to large-scale disturbance.

Flammulated owl habitat was modeled by Ecosystem Research Group (ERG) in 2012 (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. Table 53 displays some of the relevant scenarios. The existing 1987 Forest Plan was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan into context. Scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes. These scenarios also considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future and both considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads. There is an increase in the amount of actual and potential flammulated owl habitat over time under all the alternatives. Potential habitat is within HRV and remains there over the next five decades, although at the low end of the range of variability. The model may have difficulty predicting open forest conditions used by flammulated owls due to low/moderate severity wildfires and/or treatments. The model may not provide enough activities in the low elevation, dry forest habitats to restore historic stand structures. With the predicted increase in low/moderate severity wildfires, the improvement in suitable habitat should have been more pronounced; therefore, the level of certainty for the predicted outcomes is likely low (page 87 in ERG 2012). The increase in low/moderate severity fire and forest growth increases the amount large/very large trees over time. This is seen in the increase in “potential” habitat over time. However, the smaller increase in suitable habitat suggests that the increase in large trees is accompanied by dense stand structures that do not provide the best flammulated owl habitat (page 86 in ERG 2012).

Flammulated owl habitat may be restored or improved to a greater degree if more treatments are focused on the potential flammulated owl habitat in order to open up the stands. The revised Forest Plan provides the flexibility to do this kind of work.

**Table 53. Acres of Flammulated Owl Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified		1987 Forest Plan		No Treatment Scenario	
	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat	Actual Habitat	Potential Habitat
0	23,984	72,265	23,984	72,265	23,984	72,265
1	28,350	78,521	27,311	81,336	27,997	89,735
2	32,093	91,887	19,284	100,466	20,046	112,533
5	35,954	145,679	30,681	132,111	34,064	133,051

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

“Actual” habitat are those acres expected to exist at a particular point in time. “Potential” habitat is those acres that don’t quite meet all the criteria of being habitat at a particular point in time, but are on the trajectory to become “Actual” habitat

For flammulated owl, as with wildlife on the Forest in general, it is wildfire, insects/disease, in-growth, and stand succession that largely determines the amount and pattern of habitat on the Forest for this species rather than management activities (pages ES-1 and ES-2 in ERG 2012).

Under current management (Alternative A), the percentage of the Forest with high snag densities will increase over the next five decades. The percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 78 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from

approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 35 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 36 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative B Modified, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/ acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 81 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/ acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 36 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative C, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 76 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 83 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 37 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 39 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative D, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will remain steady from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 73 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and increase from 73 percent to 80 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 34 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

Direction in the revised Forest Plan that maintains snag habitat includes: FW-DC-VEG-07, FW-GDL-VEG-04 and 05, and FW-DC-WL-12.

Several variables determine the amount of flammulated owl habitat across the Forest. Fire, fire suppression, climate change, and vegetation management combine and contribute to the availability of habitat. The revised Forest Plan will move vegetation conditions towards a desired condition that will be based on historic conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03). The distribution and amount of flammulated owl habitat should be nearer historic levels if natural disturbance processes are allowed to function, particularly fire (FW-DC-FIRE-03).

The difference between the alternatives will be primarily how much vegetation treatment will be predicted each year to trend conditions toward the desired conditions for vegetation. Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

Given the predicted amounts of harvest, active restoration will have little impact on habitat pattern at the Forest scale compared to the potential impacts of fire use. The use of natural,

unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will have a much greater likelihood of maintaining or improving habitat pattern across the Forest. Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-FIRE-03 will be the most useful component in the revised Forest Plan for improving flammulated owl habitat. FW-DC-FIRE-03 reads, "The use of wildland fire (both planned and natural, unplanned ignitions), increases in many areas across the Forest. Fire plays an increased role in helping to trend the vegetation towards the desired conditions while serving other important ecosystem functions. However, when necessary to protect life, property, and key resources many wildfires are still suppressed."

The large/very large size class is currently below desired conditions (historic conditions) by approximately 221,900 acres on the Forest. With unconstrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+128,011 acres), C (+127,165 acres), D (+77,382 acres), and A (+54,032 acres). With constrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+134,742 acres), D (+132,481 acres), C (+129,377 acres), and A (+110,286 acres). All of these increases will push the amount of large/very large size class acres towards the desired conditions. A lot of the middle size class becomes large/very large over the next 50 years.

This means is that flammulated owls will find an increase of stands in the large/very large size class and an abundance of snags under all alternatives in the next 50 years.

**Access/Disturbance:** Alternative C (1,490,400 acres) will have the least acreage allowing motor vehicle use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres), A (1,677,200 acres), and D (1,792,900 acres).

Open roads facilitate access for firewood cutters, and the loss of snags near roads can reduce the availability of habitat. Flammulated owls use cavities in large snags for nesting, so it is likely that the quality of habitat near roads will be less than elsewhere due to the relative lack of snags. Recreation can disturb individuals and cause them to temporarily avoid an area, and human presence tends to be highest near roads.

FW-GDL-WL-16 and FW-DC-WL-01 will reduce or eliminate the chance of disturbance to flammulated owls. Timber sales/fuels reduction activities can cause disturbance to flammulated owls. Individual special use permits may have disturbance effects, but generally will have a small footprint and cause little or no loss of habitat.

The effects of any potential minerals development within flammulated owl habitat will depend on the footprint of the mine, as well as whether it was an above-ground or below-ground mine. Mining activities and the haul/supply route may contribute to disturbance of flammulated owls. Disturbance may result in owls utilizing other area of the Forest.

The collection of forest products may cause disturbance, but most of that disturbance will be concentrated near open roads.

**Impacts on Invertebrate Prey:** Grazing can reduce the amount of grasses and shrubs in the understory and consequently reduce the quality of foraging habitat for flammulated owls. Changes in the understory impact the abundance and species presence of arthropods that form the prey base for flammulated owls. Current grazing will continue under Alternative A. Under

the action alternatives, FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will occur at sustainable levels while protecting vulnerable resources such as wildlife habitat. That desired condition, along with FW-DC-WL-09, will maintain habitat for flammulated owls. Therefore, the grazing effects to flammulated owls and other wildlife should be limited.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression have changed the pattern and availability of flammulated owl habitat on NFS lands. Fire suppression in particular is likely to have had an impact on suitable flammulated owl habitat by leading to an increase in tree density in formerly open-canopied stands. Potential habitat on the Forest is currently within HRV (page 87 in ERG 2012). Firewood harvest near open roads may have reduced the availability of large snags for nesting.

Timber management is likely to continue on non-NFS ownerships. Their effects would depend on how many snags are retained, whether dry forest habitat that is outside of historic conditions is restored, whether large trees are maintained, and the amount of disturbance to individual flammulated owls. The development of private land may also lead to habitat loss and disturbance.

If the climate becomes warmer, it will favor the vegetation conditions that flammulated owls prefer (open, ponderosa pine or dry forest habitats). Unfortunately, fire suppression has led to increased stand densities and ladder fuels. Those stands that contain larger ponderosa pine may be at a higher risk of stand replacing disturbance (fire/insects) which will reduce flammulated owl habitat. Active restoration may be useful to move towards the desired conditions for vegetation and historic conditions, making these stands more resilient and able to handle disturbance. The use of fire for restoration will be the most useful tool rather than mechanical treatments due to the large acreages that can be improved or maintained with fire relatively cheaply. Changes in the timing of prey availability may also affect flammulated owls (page 90 in USDA 1990).

Declines in riparian habitat, threats to wintering ground habitat, and mortality while migrating or on wintering grounds can all lead to declines in the flammulated owl population. Avian predators on winter and summer ranges can also cause population declines or limit population increases.

Grazing will continue on other ownerships, and if it reduces the availability of grasses and shrubs there may be a reduction in flammulated owl foraging habitat.



### *Effects Determination*

Each action alternative **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for flammulated owl. This determination is based in part on:

- Under the revised Forest Plan, snag densities and the amount of the Forest in a large tree size class will increase over the next 50 years;
- Direction in the revised Forest Plan that maintains snag habitat includes: FW-DC-VEG-07, FW-GDL-VEG-04 and 05, and FW-DC-WL-12;
- The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance; and
- There is an increase in the amount of actual and potential flammulated owl habitat over time under all the alternatives. Potential habitat is within HRV and remains there over the next five decades, although at the low end of the range of variability (page 87 in ERG 2012).

### *Gray Wolf – *Canis lupus**

#### **Affected Environment**

Gray wolf population biology, ecology, habitat description, and relationships identified by research are described in USFWS et al. (2009), USFWS (2009), Idaho Wolf Legislative Oversight Committee's Idaho wolf conservation management plan (2002), and the Montana Gray Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (2004) and incorporated by reference. Additional information is included in the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP and MFWP 2011); and NatureServe databases (2011). Information on wolf numbers are described in Sime et al. (2011) for the State of Montana and Mack et al. (2010) for the state of Idaho, including information for the Forests, based on annual monitoring.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Wolves prey primarily on elk, deer, and moose. Domestic livestock such as cattle and sheep are also preyed upon. Wolves may also eat alternative prey, such as rodents, vegetation, and carrion. Wolves commonly hunt in packs, but lone wolves and pairs are able to kill prey as large as adult moose (MNHP and MFWP 2011). Wolf packs are family groups that consist of a breeding pair and their offspring of the current year and/or previous years and occasionally unrelated wolves. Offspring usually disperse from the natal pack at 1, 2, or 3 years of age.

The gray wolf exhibits no particular habitat preference except for the presence of native ungulates within its territory on a year-round basis. Pack activity is centered on the den site and nearby rendezvous sites from late April until September (MFWP 2003). Pack territories are dynamic and change from year to year depending on prey availability, wolf populations, and relationships with neighboring packs (MNHP and MFWP 2011). Montana wolf pack territories average around 200 square miles in size and can be 300 square miles or larger. Dispersal distances in the Northern Rockies average about 60 miles, but dispersals over 500 linear miles have been documented.

As the number of wolves has increased, so have the number of depredations and the number of wolves removed as a result. In Montana a total of 727 wolves have been killed from 1987-2010 to help resolve conflicts with livestock (Sime et al. 2011). In Idaho, from 1995 to 2010, 462 wolves were controlled for livestock depredations (Sime et al. 2011).

#### *Key Stressors (Risks and Threats) Affecting the Species*

Forest Service activities in the past that may have had direct or indirect impacts on wolves, causing displacement or mortality, include:

- Factors that affect habitat conditions for big game including timber harvest, prescribed fire, and fire suppression;
- Human access to dens and rendezvous sites during critical life history periods may result in abandonment of dens and/or young; and
- Road access.

Stressors outside Forest Service control that may cause displacement or mortality include (cumulative effects):

- Potential spread of diseases such as canine distemper virus, canine parvovirus, and others;
- Vehicle caused mortality;
- Persecution;
- Private development of wildlands;
- Factors affecting big game populations such as hunting, the spread of invasive plant species (weeds) that reduce forage values and habitat capacity for prey species, and major weather events that can contribute to high ungulate mortality;
- Connectivity loss could be a problem where urban areas or transportation corridors act as barriers;
- Illegal mortality;
- Legal mortality as a result of depredation concerns; and
- Legal mortality as a result of delisting and state public hunting strategies.

#### **Environmental Consequences – Gray Wolf**

##### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Ungulate Habitat:** Big game habitat is managed under the existing Plan (Alternative A). Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-WL-08 states that wolves will find an abundance of big game for prey. FW-DC-WL-16 states that ungulate habitat will be managed in coordination with state agencies, but that cover will be managed according to the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 and 02, FW-DC-VEG-04 and 05, and FW-DC-VEG-11). Fire will be desired to play a more natural role in the ecosystem through implementation of FW-DC-FIRE-03. Doing so will restore/maintain the vegetation component of ungulate habitat to what would have been present under natural disturbance processes. Those are the conditions that native ungulates evolved with, and therefore what wolves evolved with in these ecosystems. Disturbance to ungulates on winter range would be minimized through FW-GDL-WL-08 and 09, and disturbance during the birthing period would be minimized by FW-GDL-WL-11. Security habitat for ungulates will be provided through FW-DC-WL-02, FW-DC-WL-04 and 05, FW-DC-WL-08, FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, MA5abc-DC-WL-01, GA-DC-WL-CLK-02, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02, GA-

DC-WL-KOO-04, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01 and 03. GA direction that maintains or improves the vegetation aspect of wolf/big game habitat across the Forest (pattern) includes: GA-DC-WL-CLK-01, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01 and 04, GA-DC-VEG-LIB-03, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02, GA-DC-WL-TOB-04, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-03.

Fire and fuels can have a tremendous effect on ungulate habitat. Past fire suppression and past timber harvest practices have combined to push vegetation conditions outside of historic conditions. This has altered the amount, distribution, and quality of ungulate habitat on the KNF. Combined with future climate change, insects, and disease, it is likely that ungulate habitat will be further altered if conditions remain on their current trajectory. Vegetation management under current management is less likely to be influenced by historic conditions than the action alternatives. Additionally, there is less emphasis on utilizing natural, unplanned ignitions under current management compared to the action alternatives, and there is less predicted prescribed fire that will help maintain or restore big game habitat. Alternative A is predicted to mechanically treat approximately 6,115 ac/yr (constrained budget), or 5,732 ac/yr (unconstrained budget) and have 8,000 ac/yr prescribed fire. More natural, unplanned ignitions are expected to be actively suppressed compared to the action alternatives.

However, active restoration efforts to move towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 and 02, FW-DC-VEG-04 and 05, and FW-DC-VEG-11) will make ungulate habitat more sustainable and resilient to large-scale disturbance under the action alternatives. Large-scale disturbance will create large patches of homogenous habitat. Moving towards the desired conditions for vegetation will maintain better habitat diversity and heterogeneity. Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most predicted active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most predicted active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 ac/yr of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

Pattern (size and arrangement of habitat patches) will be addressed through the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-05). It is also affected by other direction for vegetation and fire (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-04, FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-GDL-VEG-03, and FW-DC-FIRE-03). The desired conditions are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes, which mean the pattern of wolf/big game habitat across the Forest, will be similar to what would have been present under natural disturbance processes. This is even more likely if FW-DC-FIRE-03 is implemented. Given the predicted amounts of harvest, active restoration will have little impact on habitat pattern at the Forest scale compared to the potential impacts of fire use. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will have a much greater likelihood of maintaining or improving habitat pattern across the Forest. Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) is more likely in MA1, and Alternative C

(342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

**Human Access/Roads:** High road densities have been negatively linked to wolf survival or persistence in an area (Thiel 1985).

Alternative A, the current Plan, manages threatened and endangered species habitat based on the best available information. Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-WL-08 states a desired condition that there will be a low level of disturbance around wolf dens and rendezvous sites, and FW-GDL-WL-18 sets timing restrictions and distance buffers around those sites. FW-DC-WL-02, FW-DC-WL-04 and 05, FW-DC-WL-08, FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, MA5abc-DC-WL-01, GA-DC-WL-CLK-02, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02, GA-DC-WL-KOO-04, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01 and 03 also reduce the possibility of disturbance around dens and rendezvous areas by creating security habitat with lower human presence due to lack of motorized access. Opportunistic poaching of wolves and harvesting wolves during hunting/trapping season may be more difficult due to the reduced road densities.

Alternative A will retain the existing amount of recommended wilderness and non-motorized areas. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres motorized, 1,812,700 acres over-snow motorized) will have the least acreage allowing motorized use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motorized, 1,918,400 acres over-snow motorized), A (1,677,200 acres motorized, 1,961,100 acres over-snow motorized), and D (1,792,900 acres motorized, 1,987,700 acres over-snow motorized). These acreages reflect what will remain open to over-snow vehicle use based on closure order issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan. The desired conditions for over-snow vehicle use will have that use allowed on 1,500,700 acres under Alternative C, followed by 1,713,000 acres under Alternative B Modified, and 1,859,100 acres under Alternative D. These are the acres where the MA desired conditions allows over-snow vehicle use. These acres reflect the intent for future closures, following site-specific winter travel management. In addition to the differences in MA allocations among the alternatives, the existing area closures on the Forest will be retained under all alternatives. In addition to the differences in MA allocations among the alternatives, the existing area closures on the Forest will be retained under all alternatives. All alternatives have the same acreage of wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres).

The Access Amendment reduced road densities in grizzly bear habitat (included by FW-STD-WL-02), benefiting not only grizzlies, but wolves as well. The Access Amendment applies to current management as well as the action alternatives. Opportunistic poaching of wolves may be more difficult due to the reduced road densities.

Recreation, both motorized and non-motorized, can disturb wolves or their prey and cause them to avoid an area. FW-DC-WL-02 states that a forestwide system of large remote areas will be available for species with large home ranges.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression have likely altered the pattern and availability of ungulate habitat on NFS lands, and therefore the distribution and availability of prey for wolves. Fire suppression in particular may have altered the pattern and availability of forage habitat for ungulates due to increased tree density, the closure of formerly open-canopied stands, and the encroachment of conifers into natural openings. Access management has trended towards reducing the amount of open roads and therefore the opportunities for a human-wolf encounter on NFS lands. That decreases the possibility of disturbance to wolves and makes it more difficult for wolves to be killed by providing more security habitat.

All the action alternatives will contribute toward maintaining or improving wolf and ungulate habitat. Timber harvest occurring on private, state, or Canadian lands may impact the distribution, amount, and quality of wolf and ungulate habitat and may impact connectivity between NFS lands. The desired conditions for vegetation in the revised Forest Plan would maintain or improve connectivity for wolves on the KNF.

The desired condition for connectivity FW-DC-WL-17, and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14, in the revised Forest Plan will direct the KNF to work with other agencies and landowners when highways are proposed to be constructed or reconstructed to incorporate crossing structures where needed. This should aid in minimizing the risk of vehicle collisions with wolves and other large wildlife. This will also aid in maintaining some connectivity between NFS lands as private lands are subdivided in the future. Not only is wolf habitat/connectivity impacted due to subdivision of private lands, but it reduces ungulate habitat, including winter range.

Grazing has occurred and will continue to take place on lands belonging to various entities, potentially diminishing the amount of forage available for native ungulates or displacing them. Human-wolf conflicts can occur when wolves prey upon livestock, sometimes leading to removal of individual wolves or packs.

Factors affecting big game populations such as hunting, the spread of invasive plant species (weeds) that reduce forage values and habitat capacity for prey species, and major weather events that can contribute to high ungulate mortality can reduce the availability of prey for wolves.

Wolves are habitat generalists, so the greatest effect on climate change on wolves would not be on the species directly, but on their prey species. A trend towards the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 and 02, FW-DC-VEG-04 and 05, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11) in the revised Forest Plan will make ungulate habitat more sustainable and resilient to disturbance than it is currently. The vegetation components are outside of historic conditions on the KNF, making

them more susceptible to large-scale disturbance (fire, insects, and disease). Winter range for ungulates has been lost or altered due to subdivisions, Libby Dam, and other human developments. As climates change, the winter range may shift, possibly higher in elevation away from human developments, and the timing of winter range use may shift as well (page 92 in USDA 2010). The extent of the change and the extent of the effects (positive or negative) are hard to predict. Trending towards historic conditions will allow landscapes to be more resilient and sustainable in the face of climate change. Use of FW-DC-FIRE-03 to let fire play a more natural role in the ecosystem will improve habitat conditions for ungulates, restore/maintain it towards historic conditions, and increase its resilience.

In 2009, a wolf hunting season occurred; however, a court decision in 2010 reinstated the ESA protections for the gray wolf. In 2011 wolves were delisted again and hunting/trapping is occurring. The currently expanding wolf population may see a decreased growth rate, or see a population decline (while still meeting recovery objectives). If the wolf population continues to meet recovery objectives, then wolves are likely to continue to be present to occupy habitat on the KNF.

Wolves are also sometimes killed (legally) due to depredation problems. This form of mortality has not kept wolf populations from exceeding recovery goals.

Canine distemper, parvovirus, and other diseases have the potential to decrease or limit wolf populations.

Persecution of wolves due to some people's negative attitudes towards them can lead to illegal wolf mortality. FW-DC-WL-02, FW-DC-WL-04 and 05, FW-DC-WL-08, FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, MA5abc-DC-WL-01, GA-DC-WL-CLK-02, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02, GA-DC-WL-KOO-04, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01 and 03 can provide security habitat on NFS lands and lessen the chance of persecution of wolves on NFS lands and limits motorized access for hunting/trapping of wolves.

### *Effects Determination*

Each action alternative **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for gray wolf. The effects determination is based in part on:

- FW-DC-WL-08 states that wolves will find an abundance of big game for prey;
- Den/rendezvous sites will be protected through FW-DC-WL-01 and FW-GDL-WL-18;
- FW-DC-WL-02, FW-DC-WL-04 and 05, FW-DC-WL-08, FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, MA5abc-DC-WL-01, GA-DC-WL-CLK-02, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02, GA-DC-WL-KOO-04, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01 and 03 also reduce the possibility of disturbance around dens and rendezvous areas by creating security habitat with lower human presence due to lack of motorized access. These will also provide security for big game; and
- Vegetation conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-05, FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-GDL-VEG-03, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), under all action alternatives, will be maintained or improved for wolves and their prey in the long-term.

*Harlequin duck – *Histrionicus histrionicus****Affected Environment**

Harlequin duck population biology, ecology, habitat description, and relationships identified by research are described in Cassirer et al. (1996), Carlson (2004), Hendricks and Reichel (1998) and USFWS (1998) and incorporated by reference. Sources of ecological and occurrence information is available from state agencies such as Montana and Idaho Partners in Flight, and federal agencies that have developed shorebird and waterbird conservation plans. Observation data and use information for the Forest is based on formal surveys conducted periodically throughout the Forest.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan.

*Habitat and Life History Needs*

Harlequin ducks use clear, fast-flowing rivers and streams for breeding; diving to river bottoms to pick larval insects from rocky substrates. After breeding, individuals migrate to the coasts of North America and Greenland. Four habitat characteristics were noted at more than 50 percent of harlequin duck observations in the Tetons (Wallen 1987 as cited in MFWP 2005): 1) streamside perennial shrub vegetation; 2) meandering (braided) channel types; 3) more than three loafing sites/10 m; and 4) areas unused by humans. Harlequins prefer stream size of second order or greater, stream gradients between 1 percent and 7 percent, and some areas of shallow water (riffles) (PIF 2000). They also prefer clear water, with gravel to boulder size substrate. Harlequins feed primarily on crustaceans, mollusks, insects, and a few small fishes (NatureServe 2011).

Suitable habitat, although uncommon, is fairly well distributed across the Forest. In many instances the confluence of these streams with the major river systems are situated on private lands and have been developed. In the 1970s and early 1980s large wood was removed from many of the streams on the Forest, which may have been a factor in use by harlequin ducks. However, large wood has been put back into many of those streams either as a result of restoration or from natural events. Overall, habitat for harlequin ducks has not changed significantly on NFS lands on the Forest.

*Key Stressors to the Species (Risks and Threats)*

These stressors can lead to habitat loss or degradation, disturbance, nest abandonment, or even mortality.

Potential risks and threats to harlequin ducks considered to be outside Forest control (cumulative effects):

- Harlequins are present on the Forest only during the nesting and brood rearing seasons, then migrate to the coasts of Washington and Oregon to winter. A change in population may not represent changes in habitat conditions on the Forest but may be influenced by activities off Forest, particularly in wintering areas (NatureServe 2011);

- Demographic models have suggested that harlequin duck population growth rates are most sensitive to changes in adult survival (Goudie et al. 1994 cited in Carlson 2004). The most easily managed threat that directly affects adult survival is hunting (Carlson 2004);
- Another major factor that directly affects the survival of adult harlequins is oil pollution (Ibid);
- Nest predation can lead to population declines or hinder population increases;
- Heavy metal poisoning can cause harlequin mortality; and
- Illegal shooting and trapping can cause harlequin mortality.

Potential risks and threats to harlequin ducks from activities on NFS lands (indirect effects):

- Loss or degradation of habitat – Activities that result in streambank or channel alteration that eliminates or reduces cover and food supply (PIF 2000, NatureServe 2011, Carlson 2004). These include channelization, damming, livestock grazing, brush removal, timber harvest, gravel extraction, logjam removal, dredging, bank rip-rap, and road construction (PIF 2000);
- Disturbance at the nest site or of nesting colonies – Human activity, either instream or on the bank may displace birds and indirectly impact reproduction. Activities include boating use, angler use, hiking, camping, and land management activities in and along streams during the breeding season (PIF 2000, Spahr et al. 1991, NatureServe 2011, (Carlson 2004);
- Water level fluctuation – High water during nesting and brood rearing can reduce or eliminate productivity. Low water will render feeding and brood rearing habitats unavailable. These activities include hydropower development, stream diversion or damming, timber harvest and road construction (PIF 2000, NatureServe 2011, PIF 2000, Carlson 2004) and
- Wetland contamination/pesticide reduction of favored insect foods – Sedimentation and toxic chemical pollution may reduce the supply of macroinvertebrates or reduce the ducks ability to find prey. These activities include road construction, timber harvest, livestock grazing, toxic chemical spills, and mining (PIF 2000, NatureServe 2011, Carlson 2004).

### **Environmental Consequences – Harlequin Duck**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Habitat Loss/Degradation (nesting, prey availability, and water fluctuations):** FW-DC-AR-07 states that the desired condition will be for a transportation system that will be environmentally compatible, and will have minimal impacts on resources such as sensitive species. Newly constructed or reconstructed roads will not encroach into riparian areas and streams in such a way that it impacts channel function or geometry. This desired condition will therefore reduce the effects of roads/trails on harlequin habitat.

Fires, in particular large fires, have the potential to affect harlequin habitat. Not only may fires burn riparian areas, but the potential for sediment, changes in water flows, and changes in downed wood increases post-fire. Fire suppression could alter riparian/aquatic habitats and change the availability of prey species. Fuels reduction and a trend towards the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 05, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03) will restore/maintain conditions nearer to historic conditions and increase resiliency of forested habitats. This will restore natural processes nearer to what was present historically. There is a lower likelihood of large-scale disturbance altering riparian habitat. Harlequin habitat will be nearer to what was present historically and will be more resilient to disturbance processes.



Vegetation management, if done to move vegetation conditions nearer to historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation, will create more resilient stand conditions and lessen the likelihood of a large-scale, stand replacing events. Even if riparian areas had no timber management, the work done in the uplands will reduce the likelihood of insects, disease, or fire in the uplands impacting the adjacent riparian areas. Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year).

Much of the direction in the revised Forest Plan under the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section will maintain or improve riparian areas, and consequently harlequin habitat. In particular, FW-DC-WTR-01, FW-DC-AQH-01, and FW-DC-AQS-01 will maintain/restore stream habitats so that they have natural processes consistent with their natural potential and water quality that supports native species, including invertebrates (harlequin prey). This direction, along with the other direction under the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section, will minimize water fluctuations that are outside the normal range and will also provide habitat for not only harlequin ducks but the invertebrate prey they rely upon. This direction will also maintain nesting habitat.

Grazing can alter riparian habitat by changing vegetation or increasing sedimentation. FW-DC-GRZ-01 states a desired condition that grazing will occur at sustainable levels that protect vulnerable resources. This includes riparian areas and wildlife habitat. This will protect riparian areas and harlequin habitat.

Mineral development, special uses, and lands activities can reduce habitat quality and quantity. FW-STD-RIP-04 states that mine waste and mining facilities should be located outside of RCAs and managed to prevent impacts to RCAs and aquatic resources.

**Disturbance:** The incorporation of the Access Amendment for grizzly bears in all the alternatives will also improve or maintain harlequin habitat by reducing the amount of roads open to motor vehicle use. This will reduce the potential for disturbance to harlequins where roads are near suitable habitat. Where motorized access still exists near suitable habitat, then the potential for human presence is greater and the chance that harlequin ducks would at least be temporarily displaced to other suitable habitat on the Forest.

FW-GDL-WL-19 provides direction to minimize disturbance around harlequin nests. It will result in a lower probability of a harlequin being displaced to other suitable habitat on the Forest. FW-DC-WL-01 and FW-DC-WL-10 also provide direction to minimize disturbance.

The collection of other forest products may cause disturbance to harlequins, if that activity occurs within a riparian zone where harlequins are present. This may at least temporarily cause harlequins to avoid the area of activity in the short-term.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan.

Recreation is the activity on NFS lands most likely to have impacted harlequin ducks in the past by causing disturbance to individual birds. Roads near waterways may have also impacted habitat and facilitated disturbance to individual birds. Timber harvest near riparian areas may have also altered the availability of habitat or caused disturbance to individual birds.

Timber management is likely to continue on non NFS ownerships. Their effects would depend on the amount of habitat alteration, effects on riparian areas/streams, and the amount of disturbance to individual harlequin ducks.

Grazing will continue on other ownerships, and if it reduces the availability of vegetation within riparian areas, or increases sediment in streams, then harlequin habitat quality could be decreased.

The effects of climate change on water flows could impact harlequin habitat. Water levels could make nesting and foraging habitat unsuitable at times when they historically would have been suitable. Changes in water temperatures could alter the availability of aquatic prey species. It is difficult to predict the exact effects of climate change for harlequin ducks. It could mean a loss of suitable habitat in some areas while newly suitable habitat becomes available elsewhere. This may result in a change in harlequin distribution or abundance on the Forest. Distributional shifts are one way species respond to climate change (page 90 in USDA 2010).

Recreation is likely to increase on all land ownership types, if for no other reason than human population growth. This will increase human disturbance and potentially impact harlequin ducks on all ownerships.

Impacts on wintering grounds or during migration can have a large impact on harlequin populations and the number that return to the Forest to breed. Losses of adults during hunting season can limit populations. Nest predation, illegal shooting/trapping, heavy metal poisoning, and oil pollution (wintering grounds) can limit populations as well.

### *Effects Determination*

Each of the action alternatives **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for harlequin duck. This determination is based in part on:

- Much of the direction under the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section of the revised Forest Plan would aid in maintaining or improving habitat conditions for harlequin ducks. Additionally, FW-DC-WL-10 maintains aquatic and riparian habitat; and
- Disturbance to harlequin ducks may occur due to management activities and recreationists. FW-DC-WL-01, FW-DC-WL-10, and FW-GDL-WL-19 provide direction to minimize disturbance.

### *Northern Bog Lemming – Synaptomys borealis chapmani*

#### **Affected Environment**

The northern bog lemming is part of a group of mammal species associated or dependent on wetland habitats. Northern bog lemming population biology, ecology, habitat description, and relationships identified by research are described in Reichel and Beckstrom (1993, 1994) and Reichel and Corn (1997) and are incorporated by reference. Additional information on the species is included in the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP and MFWP 2011), and NatureServe (2011) databases. Species observations are provided by the state databases and district and Forest records, based in part on formal surveys conducted on the Forest. The northern bog lemming is rarely trapped and is considered one of the least known mice in North America (Reichel and Corn 1997).

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Initially believed to be restricted to fens and bogs, northern bog lemmings have been found in at least nine community types, including Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, birch, willow, sedge (*Carex*), spike rush (*Eleocharis*), or combinations of the above, often occurring in wet meadows, fens, or bog-like environments (MNHP and MFWP 2011). Most populations in Montana, however, have been found on peatlands (Boggs and Woods 2004 cited in IDFG 2005) and the best predictor for potential northern bog lemming sites is the presence of large, thick moss mats, particularly sphagnum moss (Reichel and Corn 1997). Known sites in Montana range in size from 1 to approximately 349 acres (Reichel and Corn 1997). On the Kootenai it is estimated that a total of 275 acres of habitat are occupied and an additional 75 acres are considered potential habitat (Johnson 2004).

Northern bog lemmings feed on grasses, sedges, and other herbaceous vegetation, but also snails, slugs, and other invertebrates (Reichel and Corn 1997). Typically occupied habitat has high moisture levels. They feed on grasses and other herbaceous vegetation. They are active day and night throughout the year. They occupy surface runways and burrow systems up to 12 inches deep. They may be found in small colonies with population densities that may reach 36 individuals per acre (Reichel and Corn 1997).

Little is known about northern bog lemming life history and demography (MNHP and MFWP 2011). Information on reproduction is very limited (MNHP and MFWP 2011). No information on movement is available and at this time it is unknown if there is any interaction between individual populations of northern bog lemming (MNHP and MFWP 2011).

#### *Key Stressors Affecting the Species Group*

The following Forest Service management activities may have direct or indirect effects on wetland wildlife and their habitats (indirect effects):

- Fire (both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) is a needed component to ensure presence of sufficient habitats in appropriate successional condition but can also cause direct mortality;

- Livestock grazing may alter the vegetation community, which may alter the invertebrate community, an important food source for many of these species;
- Long-term fire suppression may alter the vegetation community and increase fire severity;
- Pesticide use could decrease the availability of insects, the primary food source for several of these species;
- Road and right-of-way construction, especially if affects hydrologic function;
- Species like the northern bog lemming (rare, patchily distributed, and confined to rare habitats) are at particular risk of extinction (Shaffer 1981 cited in Reichel and Corn 1997); and
- Northern bog lemmings may also be threatened by human disturbance. Impacts to bogs and wet meadows from off highway vehicles and snowmobiles have the potential to degrade bog lemming habitat and negatively impact the species (Hickman et al. 1999, IDFG 2005).

Stressors outside Forest Service control (cumulative effects) include private land development, water diversions, surface water development, and the risk of extinction as a result of natural factors such as rarity of bog species and habitat.

These stressors can lead to habitat loss, displacement, or mortality.

### **Environmental Consequences – Northern Bog Lemming**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Loss or Degradation of Bog Habitat:** Under Alternative A, wetlands will continue to be protected. Direction in the action alternatives to protect peatlands can be found in FW-DC-VEG-12 and FW-GDL-VEG-09. FW-GDL-VEG-09 sets a buffer up to 600 feet around peatlands. Much of the direction in the Watershed, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Habitats portions in the action alternatives will also maintain or improve peatlands as well. FW-DC-AR-07 states that the transportation system will have minimal impacts on sensitive species, watersheds, aquatic species, and other resources. Taken together, this direction will maintain or restore peatlands.

**Fire/Fire Suppression:** Fire suppression has potentially impacted northern bog lemming habitat by allowing encroachment of conifers and increasing the risk of a large-scale fire starting in the uplands and moving into the peatlands and bog areas. Higher elevation habitats may only need passive restoration or maintenance. Areas outside of historic conditions at lower elevations may need active restoration. Moving low and mid-elevation stands towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation will decrease the chance that a large-scale disturbance such as fire would move from the stands into bog lemming habitat.

Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) is more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

In addition to FW-DC-FIRE-03, MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-

GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. This will be useful to maintain/restore the uplands that surround bog lemming habitat.

Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A.

Timber harvest, when done to move towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation, will improve or maintain upland conditions that influence peatlands and bogs. Timber harvest activities are not likely to occur within or immediately adjacent to peatlands due to the direction listed under forestwide direction; and therefore, disturbance due to human presence is not likely. Direction in the action alternatives to protect peatlands can be found in FW-DC-VEG-12 and FW-GDL-VEG-09. FW-GDL-VEG-09 sets a buffer up to 600 feet around peatlands. Much of the direction in the Watershed, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Habitats portions of the revised Forest Plan would also maintain or improve peatlands as well.

**Invertebrate Prey (e.g., grazing, pesticides):** Under Alternative A, wetlands will continue to be protected. Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will occur at sustainable levels while protecting vulnerable resources. This will include peatlands and bogs that provide habitat for the northern bog lemming. Pesticides, if used adjacent to peatlands and bogs, may impact invertebrate abundance and therefore food availability for bog lemmings.

**Access/Disturbance:** Under all alternatives, the Access Amendment lowered road densities and will potentially reduce the chance of disturbance in some bog lemming habitat. FW-DC-AR-07 contains a statement that the transportation system will be environmentally compatible and will have minimal impacts on resources such as sensitive species. The implementation of this desired condition will aid in reducing the effects of access on northern bog lemmings. FW-DC-WL-01 and FW-GDL-WL-21 could be used to set a distance buffer around important occupied northern bog lemming habitat. Direction in the revised Forest Plan to protect peatlands can be found in FW-DC-VEG-12 and FW-GDL-VEG-09. FW-GDL-VEG-09 sets a buffer up to 600 feet around peatlands. Much of the direction in the Watershed, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Habitats portions of the revised Forest Plan will also maintain or improve peatlands as well. Off-road motor vehicle use will not be allowed unless in designated areas (MVUM maps), and this minimizes the chance that northern bog lemming habitat will be degraded. Snowmobile use may impact bog lemming habitat through snow compaction and effects on sub-nivean habitat, but FW-GDL-WL-21 and FW-GDL-VEG-09 could be used to minimize the impacts in bog lemming habitat. Human presence in bog lemming habitat may disturb lemmings and limit their use of habitat, at least while the disturbance would be ongoing. The collection of forest products is not likely to impact bog lemmings or their habitat. Most forest products that are collected are found in the uplands, not within peatlands and bogs. Some human presence/disturbance may occur along the edges of northern bog lemming habitat, but the effects are not expected to be great.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Given the natural rarity of bog habitat and bog lemmings, they are susceptible to natural loss of populations. However, also given the natural rarity of that habitat, most activities are not likely to overlap and impact that habitat.

The past activity on NFS lands that is most likely to have impacted northern bog lemming habitat is recreation. Cross-country (non-winter) motor vehicle use is not permitted, except in areas designated on the MVUM maps. These areas are not in or near northern bog lemming habitat. Timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression potentially altered the vegetation around bog lemming habitat and the surrounding uplands. Fire suppression may have increased the risk of high severity fires near bog lemming habitat.

Recreation is likely to increase on all land ownership types, if for no other reason than human population growth. This may result in an increase in human disturbance and the possibility of motorized use degrading peatlands/bogs on non-NFS lands.

All the action alternatives will contribute toward maintaining or improving northern bog lemming habitat.

Timber harvest occurring on private or state lands, if near peatlands or bogs, could impact habitat quality.

Climate change could change the amount and quality of northern bog lemming habitat. Changes in precipitation and temperature may reduce peatland or bog habitats. The exact extent of the potential impacts are unknown, and it is unknown if new areas of habitat would be created at higher elevations as climate changes. Depending on the amount of new habitat created, and its proximity to existing habitat, displaced northern bog lemmings may or may not have adequate habitat to move to as a result of climate change. Because of induced shifts in habitat, species that are not highly mobile, such as bog lemmings may have difficulty responding to climate change (page 91 in USDA 2010). Bog/peatland habitat is naturally fragmented, adding to the difficulty for bog lemmings to shift distribution.

### *Effects Determination*

Each action alternative **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for the northern bog lemming. This determination is based in part on:

- Direction in the revised Forest Plan to protect peatlands can be found in FW-DC-VEG-12 and FW-GDL-VEG-09. FW-GDL-VEG-09 sets a buffer up to 600 feet around peatlands.

Much of the direction in the Watershed, Soils, Riparian, and Aquatic Habitats portions of the revised Forest Plan will also maintain or improve peatlands as well;

- FW-DC-WL-01 and FW-GDL-WL-21 could also be used to support setting a distance buffer around important occupied northern bog lemming habitat;
- Off-road motorized use is not allowed unless in designated areas (MVUM maps), and this minimizes the chance that northern bog lemming habitat will be degraded; and
- Snowmobile use may impact bog lemming habitat through snow compaction and effects on sub-nivean habitat, although there is no known degradation currently occurring to northern bog lemming habitat from over-snow vehicle use. FW-GDL-WL-21 and FW-GDL-VEG-09 could be used to minimize over-snow-motorized use in bog lemming habitat.

### *Townsend's Big-Eared Bat – *Corynorhinus townsendii**

#### **Affected Environment**

Bats are a useful component to the health of ecosystems and their role as the main predators of nocturnal insects, especially agricultural and forest pests, also contribute economic benefits. From an ecological perspective, bats regulate nocturnal insect populations which are inherently vital to nutrient cycling. As a group, bat numbers are poorly understood and there are few quantitative data with which to determine their population status and trends. Information on distribution, habitat requirements, migration routes, hibernation areas, and population trends is lacking for most bat species (Lenard et al. 2009). The current knowledge of their life histories, habitat requirements, distribution, ecology, and status of bats varies (Miller et al. 2005, IDFG 2005, and MFWP 2005). The best available source of ecological and occurrence information is from state agencies, and the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP and MFWP 2011). Additional investigative work has been done by the Northern Region of the Forest Service in cooperation with the state agencies in Idaho and Montana. More detailed information on specific species is located in the various references cited.

Numerous surveys have been conducted throughout the Forest in conjunction with the state agencies and portions of the Forest was included as part of a regional survey effort (Hendricks et al. 1995, 1996 and Hendricks and Maxell 2005). Information on source habitats and special habitat features are described in Wisdom et al. (2000). Management for bats is tiered to the Townsends Big-Eared bat species conservation assessment and conservation strategy for Idaho (Pierson et al. 1999) and the Montana Bat Management Plan (Schwab and DuBois 2006). Additional information and management direction is found in various databases such as Bat Conservation International.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

Surveys (Hendricks and Maxell 2005) conducted on the KNF identified that bats were detected in most habitat types, from early seral “disturbance” sites in recent clearcuts and burns to mature and late-successional stands, in ponderosa pine and riparian sites at low elevation to Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir at moderate elevation. Riparian, “disturbed,” and late-

successional/mature sites accounted for over 72 percent of the 188 sites sampled with bat detectors (Hendricks et al. 1996). However, bat activity occurred significantly more frequently in late-successional/mature forest (71.4 percent) than in “disturbed” forest stands (46.7 percent of sites). This is similar to other studies in western America (Hendricks et al. 1996). Late-successional and mature forests, which have a more complex structure often show greater bat activity than younger or disturbed forest stands (Perkins and Cross 1988, Thomas 1988, Thomas and West 1991). The availability of large snags, a component infrequently found in young and disturbed stands, is recognized as one of the most important attributes of late-successional and mature forests for bats in western North America (Hendricks et al. 1996), as large snags provide important roost sites

The lack of association of Townsend’s big-eared bat to any forest type during the Montana surveys is consistent with its known habits of roosting in buildings, bridges, caves, and mines (Christy and West 1993, Wunder and Carey 1996). Townsend’s big-eared bats are considered forest generalists within the subalpine, montane, upland woodland, and riparian woodland community groups (Wisdom et al. 2000). Bats appeared in equal proportions of late-successional/mature and riparian sites. This is not considered surprising as bats need water and insect activity is often high at water sources (Christy and West 1993).

Caves and abandoned mines are the primary roost sites for Townsend’s big-eared bat throughout most of its range though buildings have been used by maternity colonies in the northern cooler portions of the range. Bridges can be used as night roosts. Solitary males can often be found in smaller caves, mines, root cellars, buildings, and hollow trees that are unsuitable as maternity roosts (Schwab and Dubois 2006).

The term roost is used to describe any place a bat may use to rest, digest, socialize, mate, give birth, or sleep. Bats may use a wide variety of roosts for different purposes. During the day, bats sleep or enter a semi torpid state in a day roost. Some bats use a night roost to rest and digest evening and night meals. Day and night roosts are usually separate locations. Pregnant females congregate in maternity roosts to give birth and raise their young. Males and non-reproductive females gather in separate locations called bachelor colonies. Bats that do not migrate in winter hibernate in hibernacula.

Different purposes require different characteristics for each kind of roost. Bats select roosts that protect them from predation and disturbance. Environmental considerations also determine the qualities of a roost. Day roosts must block sunlight. Maternity roosts must be warm and near foraging areas. Warm temperature is important for maternity colonies because it speeds up fetal and juvenile development. Hibernating bats choose roost sites with cold stable temperatures to conserve energy, and humid climates to prevent dehydration during hibernation. The least known types of roosts are those used during migration. These roosts may be used for a limited time each year. Just as wetlands provide useful stop over areas for migrating waterfowl migration roosts may provide useful habitat for maintaining populations of migrating bats.

Bats forage upon arthropods, mainly nocturnal flying insects, although the mode of prey capture is highly variable. A wide variety of insects are taken including: moths, beetles, flies, bees and wasps, and true bugs.

### *Habitat Estimates*

There are very few natural caves on the Forest (only one cave is known on the KNF- (Kenelty cave). Abandoned/inactive mines are scattered throughout the Forest. Not all of these sites are



suitable for roosting activities, but the possibility exists that some of them do and may currently provide habitat for bats. Rock/talus slopes are present throughout the Forest especially along the river and stream systems on the Forest and many of the larger lake and wetland areas. Use of snags, bridges, buildings, and rock crevices are available throughout the Forest and provide habitat for roosting and foraging. No occupied key roosting habitat in the form of caves, tunnels, and abandoned buildings is known to exist on the KNF. There are few documented hibernacula and maternity roosts in Montana and none for the KNF (Hendricks and Maxell, 2005). In Montana four maternity colonies of Townsend's big-eared bats have been found in natural caves and one in an abandoned mine. Suitable roost sites, especially maternity roosts probably limit distribution of this species.

The current extent of habitat is similar to historical distribution, although the abundance of habitat has changed in some areas. The number of caves likely has stayed the same from historical to present periods, but human disturbance from recreation has increased, thereby causing some caves to be abandoned by bats (Idaho conservation effort 1995 in Wisdom et al. 2000). Mines proliferated in the early part of the historical period and provided additional habitat but during the 1980s thousands of abandoned mines throughout the west were closed resulting in unknown loss of established roosts (Ibid). The extent of cliffs and rocky areas has not changed since the historical period, but habitat quality of some cliffs has declined because of human disturbances (Lehmkuhl et al. 1997 cited in Wisdom et al. 2000).

#### *Large Size Class/Late-Successional Forest*

Wisdom et al. (2000) identified that there has been a strong decline in source habitats throughout the Interior Columbia Basin for species dependent on late-successional forest habitats present over broad elevations. However, late-successional forests are still considered to be well distributed across the Forest. In addition to current late-successional, the Forest is managing additional lands for their late-successional characteristics, such as large trees. The current trend is such that late-successional forests are no longer targeted for timber harvest and there is an increase in the number of large diameter trees retained in areas of vegetation management. Over the short- and long-term natural vegetation succession will result in an increase in the amount of lands in the large size class and subsequently in the amount of late-successional forest components, such as snags, important for these species.

#### *Snags*

Rabe and others (1998 cited in Wisdom et al. 2000) suggest that snag roosting bats may require higher densities of snags than cavity nesting birds because the stage at which snags are suitable for bat roosts (exfoliating bark) is extremely short-lived, requiring the use of several snags over the course of a lifetime of a bat. Bats frequently shift maternity roosts, possibly to find snags with better thermal conditions when the bark on the previous roost is no longer suitable (Ibid).

A snag analysis recently conducted for the Forest (Bollenbacher et al. 2009) provides an estimate of the number of snags currently existing throughout the forested portion of the Forest. The analysis compared the amount of snags in wilderness/roadless areas versus those outside wilderness/roadless areas. The analysis also identified however, that areas outside of wilderness/roadless areas have fewer snags per acre than those in wilderness/roadless areas. The snag densities within wilderness/roadless areas provide insight into natural snag abundance and distribution, and this can be compared to areas outside of wilderness/roadless (page 4 in Bollenbacher et al. 2009). Although there are fewer snags outside of wilderness/roadless areas, the 90 percent confidence intervals for wilderness/roadless area snags overlaps the mean

snags/acre for all but the 15"+ dbh in areas outside of wilderness/roadless (table 2 in Bollenbacher et al. 2009). In other words, the number of snags outside of wilderness/roadless areas, which represents natural snag abundance, is not very different than the number of snags outside of wilderness/roadless. Please see the snag discussion in the "Vegetation" section of the FEIS and DEIS (pages 65-68 in the DEIS) for more information regarding the findings of Bollenbacher et al. 2009 and the amount of snags available on the Forest.

### *Key Stressors Affecting Bats*

Schwab and Dubois (2006) described the main threats to bats in Montana. All species are vulnerable to habitat loss, and disturbances can cause habitat displacement or abandonment of roosting, hibernation, or maternity sites. This can occur from the removal or degradation of suitable habitat conditions due to timber harvest or fire, or from human disturbance.

The main threats to bats are:

- Disturbance of roosting sites, especially hibernacula and maternity sites;
- Environmental contaminants, including pesticides, heavy metals, and petroleum;
- Habitat degradation;
- Timber harvest;
- Fire;
- Mine closure and reclamation projects that close bat access to mines;
- Destruction of cliff roosts;
- Increased recreation in caves;
- Grazing practices may alter vegetation, which may alter the invertebrate community;
- Wind farms and other large energy developments;
- Water resources;
- Hazards at stock tanks;
- Pollution;
- Lack of information, especially about migration; and
- Intolerance of bats by people.

Stressors to bats that are outside the control of Forest Service management may include (cumulative effects):

- Global warming (climate change): may increase the risk of changes in forest composition due to increased and prolonged summer temperatures and/or drought conditions, and/or the increased risk of fire that may impact forest cover and structure;
- Private land development: developments to support increased human populations that may impact suitable forest cover on non-public lands, and impact roost sites off public lands;
- More recently a disease known as white nose syndrome has been observed in many bats of the eastern US: if WNS continues to spread at its current rate it has the potential to threaten entire species (Frick et al. 2010);
- Wind farms and other large energy developments: some bat species are susceptible to mortality from collisions with wind turbines;
- Water resources:

- 1. Hazards at stock tanks; and
- 2. Pollution;
- Lack of information especially about migration; and
- Intolerance of bats by people may result in the purposeful killing of roosting bats.

The following Forest Service management activities may impact bats or their habitat (indirect effects) and cause disturbance, roost abandonment, or mortality:

- Disturbance of roosting sites, especially hibernacula and maternity sites, primarily by recreational activities in or near caves but also from mining, road construction, and any other activities near roosts (Idaho conservation effort 1995 in Wisdom et al. 2000, page 310);
- Environmental contaminants, including pesticides, heavy metals, and petroleum; the use of insecticides in foraging areas has the potential to impact bat species primarily by reducing the prey base;
- Habitat degradation, alterations, and disturbances of any structures used for day roosts, nursery colonies, or hibernacula (caves, mines, old buildings) could affect the persistence of individual colonies (Wisdom et al. 2000);
- Timber harvest directly reduces the availability of roost sites (snags) and indirectly reduces prey populations due to changes in forest composition and structure;
- Fire (both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) also reduces roost site availability, but in turn can produce additional roosting sites, or direct mortality; long-term fire suppression may alter the vegetation community, interrupt snag recruitment and increase fire severity;
- Caves and/or abandoned mines and buildings may be removed or closed due to human safety concerns resulting in habitat loss, or those sites used by roosting bats may be vulnerable to human disturbances due to recreational use;
- Destruction of cliff roosts;
- Increased recreation in caves;
- Grazing practices may alter vegetation, which may alter the invertebrate community; and
- Road and right-of-way construction could result in the direct removal of snag or cliff habitat, as well as the additional loss over time of snags along open roads due to fuel wood cutting.

### **Environmental Consequences – Townsend’s Big-eared Bat**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Disturbance/Access:** The existing level of disturbance and access to mines/caves will be expected to continue under Alternative A. Access and recreation will have the potential to impact roosting bats or alter habitat. Most firewood cutting occurs in close proximity to open roads, and the loss of snags reduces the amount of potential roosting habitat for bats. Open roads also facilitate increased human presence for recreation and the collection of forest products which can cause disturbance to bats. Recreational caving or exploration of old mines not only disturbs roosting bats and can cause displacement or the expenditure of limited fat reserves, but it can also spread the fungus responsible for white-nose syndrome. If useful for bat protection, FW-GDL-WL-06 allows the installation of bat gates on abandoned mines. FW-GDL-WL-17 provides direction to avoid or minimize disturbance to active roosts or hibernacula, and this guideline can be used to close caves and abandoned mines (distance buffer) to protect bats from management activities. This guideline and FW-DC-WL-01 can be used to reduce disturbance at

birthing/rearing areas (certain roosts) from not only recreation but from other activities as well. A letter dated July 28, 2010 from Forest Service Deputy Chief Holtrop implements an Interim Response Strategy that includes applying decontamination protocols at all abandoned mines and caves by 10/1/2010 (Holtrop 2010). This includes public entry/exit. Combined, these measures should reduce the likelihood of white-nose syndrome spreading to the Forest.

**Loss of Roosts/Hibernacula:** Fires can both create and destroy bat habitat. Fires burn existing snags that may be used for roosting, but they also create new snags. Fires also alter vegetation structure and patterns, which in turn impact bat habitat and prey abundance. Increased fuels retard the development of large trees, and large trees eventually become snags that can be used for roosting. Fires are more likely to be suppressed under Alternative A. Under the action alternatives, fuels reduction treatments that are done to move towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03) will restore/maintain the vegetation component of bat habitat nearer to what will have been present under natural disturbance processes.

Timber harvest can remove snags potentially used for roosting, but FW-DC-VEG-07, FW-GDL-VEG-04 and 05, FW-DC-WL-12, and FW-DC-WL-15, provide direction for retaining or improving snag habitat. If timber harvest is done to trend stands towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation, then vegetation will be nearer to what would have been present under natural disturbance processes. This will provide the snag and vegetation components of bat habitat similar to the conditions and natural disturbance processes they evolved with. FW-DC-WL-14 and FW-GDL-WL-05 provides direction for maintaining unlogged conditions post-fire. This will also aid in providing snags for bat roosting.

FW-GDL-WL-06 and 07 protect abandoned mines/caves and buildings that are used by bats. Both snags and large trees will increase under all alternatives over the next 50 years.

FW-DC-WL-15 states that caves, mines, and snags provide areas for roosting, hibernation, or maternity sites for various species of bats.

Direction in the revised Forest Plan that maintains snag habitat includes: FW-DC-VEG-07, FW-GDL-VEG-04 and 05, and FW-DC-WL-12.

Under current management (Alternative A), the percentage of the Forest with high snag densities will increase over the next five decades. The percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 78 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range would increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 35 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 36 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative B Modified, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 81 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/ acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 36 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative C, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 76 percent in decade 5 with an

unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 83 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 37 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 39 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative D, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will remain steady from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 73 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and increase from 73 percent to 80 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 34 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

Several variables determine the amount of bat habitat across the Forest in the form of large snags/trees and the vegetation useful to provide prey habitat. Fire, fire suppression, climate change, and vegetation management combine and contribute to the availability of habitat. The revised Forest Plan will move vegetation conditions towards a desired condition that is based on historic conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03). The distribution and amount of bat habitat should be nearer historic levels if natural disturbance processes are allowed to function, particularly fire (FW-DC-FIRE-03).

The difference between the alternatives is primarily how much vegetation treatment will be predicted each year to trend conditions toward the desired conditions for vegetation. Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

Given the predicted amounts of harvest, active restoration will have little impact on habitat pattern at the Forest scale compared to the potential impacts of fire use. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will have a much greater likelihood of maintaining or improving habitat pattern across the Forest. Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. Under the action alternatives, FW-DC-FIRE-03 will be the most useful component in the revised Forest Plan for improving bat habitat. FW-DC-FIRE-03 reads, "The use of fire (both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) increases in many areas across the Forest. Fire plays an increased role in helping to trend the vegetation towards the desired conditions while serving other important ecosystem functions. However, undesirable unplanned ignitions continue to be suppressed where necessary to protect life, property and other key resources."

The large/very large size class is currently below desired conditions (historic conditions) by approximately 221,900 acres on the Forest. With unconstrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+128,011 acres), C

(+127,165 acres), D (+77,382 acres), and A (+54,032 acres). With constrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+134,742 acres), D (+132,481 acres), C (+129,377 acres), and A (+110,286 acres). All of these increases will push the amount of large/very large size class acres towards the desired conditions. A lot of the middle size class becomes large/very large over the next 50 years.

What this means is bats will find an increase of stands in the large/very large size class and an abundance of snags under all alternatives in the next 50 years.

There could be a loss of habitat associated with special use permits. Primarily this will be through the loss of snags. Special use permits that involve old buildings can disturb bats or affect roosting habitat. FW-GDL-WL-07 states that buildings should be inspected prior to removal or demolition to determine bat use and then disturbance avoided until bats are gone for the season or removed. FW-GDL-WL-17 provides direction to minimize or avoid disturbance around active key habitat features such as roost sites and hibernacula.

Minerals development both creates and removes habitat for bats. Underground mines create potential roosting habitat, as do some buildings. The footprint of a mine will remove snags and the potential for snags until reclamation has been completed. New mining developments may be in areas of historic mining, so there may be some disturbance or loss of habitat associated with the loss of old underground mines or buildings. Minerals objective FW-OBJ-MIN-01 for abandoned mines will have a desired outcome of one reclaimed abandoned mine annually. In abandoned mines where bats occur, bat gates or similar structures should be installed as per FW-GDL-WL-06.

**Prey Availability:** Most fires will continue to be actively suppressed under Alternative A, and the current level of vegetation treatments would continue.

The desired conditions for vegetation (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03) will provide the stand structures similar to what will have been present under natural disturbance processes, and therefore, the habitats that these bats and their prey evolved with in these ecosystems.

Much of the direction under the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section of the revised Forest Plan will help maintain riparian areas that often provide foraging habitat for bats.

Grazing can impact vegetation, which effects prey abundance. Only a few water troughs are on the Forest (10-12) and no issues with wildlife drowning in them have been detected. FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will occur at sustainable levels while protecting vulnerable resources. This will reduce the chances of vegetation alteration affecting important sensitive species habitat.

The use of pesticides to control insect outbreaks will potentially kill non-target species and reduce the availability of prey for bats.

Additional direction in the Plan that contributes to prey availability: FW-DC-WL-09, FW-DC-WL-10, FW-DC-WL-11, and FW-DC-WL-13.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are

common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past activities on NFS lands have potentially impacted bat habitat. Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression have likely altered snag availability in some locations, although across the landscape abundant snags remain. Past mining activities likely created roosting habitat for bats. Old buildings on NFS lands may also provide bat roosting habitat in some instances. Bridges are also another potential roost site for bats that would not have existed historically.

White-nose syndrome continues to spread and decimate bat populations. It has not yet reached the western US. Recreational cave/mine exploration on all land ownerships can lead to increased rate of spread of the disease. There is a decontamination protocol in place for NFS owned lands, which should aid in slowing the spread on NFS lands. Cave/mine closures on all ownerships may also aid in slowing the spread.

Grazing will continue on other ownerships, and if it reduces the availability of grasses and shrubs there may be a reduction in bat foraging habitat.

A changing climate may impact the suitability of habitat and alter prey abundance. As temperatures and moisture regimes change, the peak abundance of insects may shift (page 90 in USDA 2010). This may affect the abundance of prey during key periods such as when female bats are caring for their young. Surface temperature changes may change the interior temperatures of caves and abandoned mines due to airflow into the caves. As bats are selective in the microclimates in which they will roost, this may cause bats to shift their use elsewhere inside caves/mines or abandon them altogether. Riparian areas host an abundance of insects, in addition to water for bats, and climate change could alter the quantity/quality of this kind of habitat.

Recreation is likely to increase on all land ownership types, if for no other reason than human population growth. This will increase human disturbance and potentially impact bats on all ownerships. Additionally, many people are intolerant of bats and this can lead to disturbance of bats, loss of access to roost sites, or mortality.

Water pollution can impact prey abundance and also directly impact bats; and stock tanks used for grazing can cause drowning if there are no escape ramps in place.

Impacts to bats during migration are not well understood. Habitat loss along migration routes, including roost sites, may cause populations declines in bats.

### *Effects Determination*

Each action alternative **may impact individuals or habitat, but is not likely to result in a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability** for Townsend’s big-eared bat. This determination is based in part on:

- FW-GDL-WL-06 and 07 protect abandoned mines/caves and buildings that are used by bats. Additional direction in the revised Forest Plan that protects roosts/hibernacula and minimizes disturbance includes FW-DC-WL-01 and FW-GDL-WL-17;
- FW-DC-WL-15 states that caves, mines, and snags provide areas for roosting, hibernation, or maternity sites for various species of bats;
- Both snags and large trees increase in abundance under the revised Forest Plan;
- Direction in the revised Forest Plan that maintains snag habitat includes: FW-DC-VEG-07, FW-GDL-VEG-04 and 05, and FW-DC-WL-12; and
- The revised Forest Plan will move vegetation conditions towards a desired condition that will be based on historic conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 08, FW-DC-VEG-11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03). The distribution and amount of bat habitat should be nearer historic levels if natural disturbance processes are allowed to function, particularly fire (FW-DC-FIRE-03).

### Management Indicator Species (MIS)

The following management indicator species (MIS) were proposed because they represent an issue or concern. Elk security habitat was a concern, especially given the importance of this species for hunting. Elk will be an indicator for elk security only. A landbird assemblage (insectivores) was proposed to aid in analyzing the effects of moving towards the desired conditions for vegetation. This assemblage will be used as an indicator for progress towards the desired conditions for vegetation.

These MIS are to be used to compare alternatives in this EIS and analyze effects. Although several individual species are listed under the landbird assemblage, effects will be analyzed for the assemblage in general and not the individual species. These MIS, elk and insectivores, were not proposed because of a viability concern. Additionally, viability of these MIS will not be analyzed in future projects, nor will they be monitored at the project level. See the table 54 for the rationale for MIS selection (also see the KIPZ MIS Selection paper, USDA 2013).

**Table 54. Management Indicator Species for the Kootenai National Forest**

Species	Habitat Association	Indicator	Rationale for Selection
Rocky Mountain Elk	Forested stands (cover), and grasslands/shrub (forage)	Security Areas (Acres and percent)	Elk are of high social importance and are sensitive to the availability of security habitat. Management activities that impact road use can alter security habitat. Monitoring of security habitat would be feasible through remote sensing (ex: travel route GIS layers)
Landbird Assemblage (insectivores)	Varies: open forest structures, mature forests, and snags	Varies: open forests/openings, burned forests, mature forests, snags	Moving towards the desired conditions for vegetation would restore or maintain habitat for some species of insectivores. The Forest would monitor movement towards the desired conditions for vegetation

The KIPZ MIS Selection paper (2013) in the project record describes in more detail why these species were selected as MIS, why the old MIS were not retained, what will be monitored, and discusses the scientific criticisms of the MIS concept.



*Rocky Mountain Elk – Cervus canadensis nelson*

Elk has been proposed as a MIS due to concerns over security habitat for this species. The alternatives will be analyzed relative to their impact on security habitat for elk. Additionally, the impacts of other non-security related direction in the revised Forest Plan were analyzed as well. Also, see the big game analysis section in the document for more effects to big game in general.

**Affected Environment**

Rocky Mountain elk are a hunted species with secure populations. Montana has a rich tradition of big game hunting, and has earned a well-deserved reputation for having some of the best big game hunting in North America. Elk have high economic and social values and is a large contributor to the quality of life in Montana.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes). For the analysis of security habitat, the planning subunit was the scale of analysis agreed upon during coordination with MFWP early in the revision process.

*Habitat and Life History Needs*

Elk are habitat generalists and occupy open to dense forests interspersed with grassland or shrubland openings. Lower elevation winter range with good cover and forage or browse is important to elk. Habitat that reduces vulnerability to hunting, severe winter weather, and predators is important for elk.

Elk eat grasses, sedges, forbs, deciduous shrubs (especially willow and serviceberry), young trees (especially chokecherry and maple), and some conifers (varies between ranges). Where shrubs and grasses are available, grass is preferred. Browse may be used, particularly in winter and on winter ranges. Conifers and arboreal lichens may also be used. Grass is most important in spring. Forbs are important in summer (MNHP and MFWP 2011).

Elk tend to graze more where open habitats are available, and have higher thresholds of snow depths that produce movements or cause physical impairment to movement (Sweeney and Sweeney 1984). This allows elk to inhabit slightly higher terrain (with deeper snows) and delay movements to lower elevation (Sweeney and Sweeney 1984, Boyce 1991). In areas of deeper snow, elk use steeper slopes, which have less snow (Poole and Mowat 2005).

Road construction is the single most important Forest action with potential to affect elk security and unroaded hunting opportunity. The security area calculations associated with Hillis et al. (1991) are based on open motorized routes.

Security areas also become less functional as hunting pressure increases regardless of available access and forest cover. This results from increasing demand for unroaded recreation and also as a result of hunters trying to avoid areas of higher pressure.

A large portion of lands identified as big game winter range have also been delineated as wildland urban interface (WUI). For example, on the KNF over 55 percent of the winter range is also in the WUI. Current management in the WUI emphasizes a reduction in fire risk and an increase in human safety. In some cases, such as immediately adjacent to a home, management to reduce fire risk and improve conditions for human safety are not necessarily compatible with

big game habitat maintenance/restoration. However, it is recognized that the priority in those areas closest to structures is human safety and a reduction in fire risk, while outside of those areas management for both is considered more compatible. Areas immediately adjacent to homes are generally not conducive to providing winter range for ungulates anyway, due to the disturbance from human presence.

#### *Key Stressors Affecting Elk*

Forest Service activities that may have direct or indirect impacts on species within this group include:

- Timber harvest which alters the quantity, quality, and placement of cover. Timber harvest, especially with prescribed fire, can increase forage quality and quantity;
- Prescribed fire by itself can also increase forage quality and quantity;
- Fire suppression can reduce the amount of forage, and alter the quantity, quality, and placement of cover;
- Access management, especially motorized access, can be utilized to protect, or when used in conjunction with hunting, to reduce populations;
- Activities that reduce that amount of security during the big game hunting season; and
- Noxious weeds can also reduce the amount of forage available for elk.

Stressors outside Forest Service control include (cumulative effects):

- The potential spread of chronic wasting disease and other diseases;
- Hunting;
- Vehicle-caused mortality;
- Private development, especially in winter range, which can lead to loss of habitat, loss of connectivity, increase in vulnerability (from predators year-round, and during the hunting season);
- The spread of invasive plant species (weeds) reduces forage values and habitat capacity
- Severe winters can contribute to high herd mortality;
- Vegetation/fire management on non-NFS lands effect cover/forage; and
- Increased access (roads) on non-NFS lands.

These stressors can result in habitat loss, displacement, or mortality. The stressors that are outside of Forest Service control can result in population changes. Therefore, the number of elk residing on the Forest is not completely under the control of the Forest.

### **Environmental Consequences**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Vegetation/Fire Management Effects on Cover/Forage:** Alternative A will be predicted to treat approximately 14,115 acres/year (constrained budget) or 13,723 acres/year (unconstrained budget). The existing 1987 Forest Plan has limited flexibility to use unplanned ignitions to maintain/improve habitat.

Fire suppression has impacted the vegetation component of security habitat for elk. Many areas are outside of historic conditions and in need of active restoration and fuels reduction. If vegetation management will be done to move conditions towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation and fire (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 06, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), then the vegetation component of elk security habitat will be nearer to what will have been present based on natural disturbance processes. Stands will be more resilient to large-scale disturbance and less likely to be lost to fire/insects/disease. The reintroduction of fire into ecosystems can aid in restoring habitat conditions. As stated in FW-DC-FIRE-03, fire plays an increased role in helping to trend vegetation towards desired conditions.

Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

The ERG report (ERG 2012) did not specifically analyze big game habitat, instead it analyzed a dozen other species that represent a variety of habitats on the KNF, including some that would occupy habitat that would overlap with low-elevation winter range for big game. Although big game were not specifically analyzed, this conclusion from ERG (2012) is important: "...natural disturbances (in the form of wildfire and certain insects and diseases) are projected to have effects on habitat that render the effects of management less than remarkable at the planning scale... Thus, treatments that may have considerable effects at the unit or project scale are lessened in the larger context of the total amounts of wildfire, disease, insects, and succession at the individual national forest or the KIPZ scale" (page E-4 in ERG 2012). This means that the KNF trends towards the desired conditions for vegetation and fire, but that it is natural disturbance processes that determine overall amounts and pattern of wildlife habitats across the KNF, and active management actions such as fuels reduction and timber harvest have little impact at the Forest scale. In general, management had a positive effect on the amount and distribution of habitat for wildlife. Those desired conditions for vegetation and fire are based on historic conditions, natural disturbance processes, and changing climates. The desired conditions are similar to what wildlife, including big game, would have evolved with on the KNF, so the amount and pattern of big game habitat would be similar to what they evolved with on the KNF. This includes the amount of winter range, cover, and forage.

There is GA direction that pertains to maintaining or improving habitat (vegetation components) on winter range for big game: GA-DC-WL-CLK-01, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02 and 03, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01 and 04, GA-DC-VEG-LIB-03, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02, GA-DC-WL-TOB-04, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-03.

Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will be more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

FW-GDL-WL-10 will be applied to reduce the impacts of management on elk security habitat. Timber harvest can benefit security habitat if it is done to trend towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation. In doing so, the resiliency of the timbered stand component of security habitat is improved/maintained and security habitat is less likely to be lost to a large-scale disturbance (fire, insects, and disease).

Concentrations of livestock can influence elk habitat use. Elk will avoid areas of high livestock use (PNRS 2006), so livestock presence can affect elk use of security areas. Livestock graze on a small proportion of the Forest, so there are many areas free from cattle. Depending on the intensity of grazing, the use of fire can be affected due to the loss of fine ground fuels to carry a fire. Human presence associated with livestock management can also cause disturbance to elk and cause them to avoid those areas. FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will occur at sustainable levels while protecting vulnerable resources, so this could aid in reducing impacts from livestock where they are found to be a concern.

Noxious weeds are limited or reduced through FW-DC-VEG-10, FW-OBJ-VEG-02, GA-DC-VEG-FSH-01, GA-DC-WL-FSH-03, GA-DC-VEG-KOO-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-04, GA-DC-

VEG-LIB-03, and GA-DC-VEG-TOB-02. This improves forage conditions not only in security areas, but across the Forest.

**Access:** Both motorized and non-motorized access can result in disturbance to big game, including elk (Ciuti et al. 2012, Canfield et al. 1999, Schultz and Bailey 1978, Freddy et al. 1986, Ward and Cupal 1979). As road densities increase, elk habitat effectiveness decreases (Lyon 1984). In some cases ungulates may react more to a person on foot than a motorized vehicle (Eckstein et al. 1979, Richens and Lavigne 1978, Lavigne 1976). White et al. (2005) found that some animals in Yellowstone can habituate to over-snow motorized use and display little or no reaction unless they are approached on foot. This report by White et al. (2005) suggested that active responses by wildlife can be diminished by restricting over-snow motorized travel to predictable routes and times, reducing the number of vehicles in a group and other means.

The response of other big game, such as white-tailed deer, to snowmobiling has been studied as well (Dorrance et al. 1975). Depending on where the activity occurs, such as in an area where hunting is allowed versus where it is not, white-tailed deer may habituate to snowmobile use. In areas where hunting is allowed, the deer reacted more to snowmobiles and may not as easily habituate to human (snowmobile) presence (Dorrance et al. 1975).

Some research on the effects of recreation on big game has been conducted at the Starkey Experimental Forest in Oregon. Wisdom et al. (2005) found that off-road activities such as ATV use, hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding appear to have a “substantial effect on elk behavior” (page 6 in Wisdom et al. 2005). It should be noted that their “off-road” transects included the use of primitive road beds (page 2 in Wisdom et al. 2005). The study did not include an estimate of the energetic costs of the behavioral effects to elk, so it is unclear what the overall effects were to the individual animal or herd health. However, the study does show that the activities studied can impact elk use of habitat due to disturbance/displacement away from the human activities. The reactions of mule deer during the study were not as clear. Deer didn’t appear to move as much in response to the activities, but they may have been responding by making small behavioral changes such as using dense cover. Naylor et al. (2009) reported similar results for elk from this study on the Starkey Experimental Forest.

Ciuti et al. (2012) is representative of the impacts of recreation on big game on NFS lands. In Ciuti et al. (2012) they found that the “highest levels of vigilance were recorded on public lands where hunting and motorized recreation activities were cumulative compared to the national park during summer, which had the lowest levels of vigilance.” Elk, and other big game, are hunted on the KNF, so the findings in Ciuti et al. (2012) are relevant. Ciuti et al. (2012) found that elk decreased their feeding time when closer to roads and became more vigilant as traffic volume increased.

The KNF acknowledges that all types of recreation, whether motorized or non-motorized, can have disturbance impacts on wildlife, including big game. However, most non-motorized users arrive on the KNF and navigate to their chosen non-motorized recreation spot by driving a motorized vehicle on the KNF’s road system. Additionally, the number of non-motorized users diminishes with increasing distance from a road. Thus road access influences the distribution of non-motorized use on the KNF.

The revised Forest Plan includes direction to minimize disturbance to big game from management activities, with the definition of management activity in the revised Forest Plan being “[a]ny activity that is carried out or authorized by the Forest that would result in impacts

on natural resources or change human use of the Forest.” Access management, both motorized and non-motorized, would classify as a management activity because it would have an impact on natural resources (e.g., big game) and change human use on the Forest (the distribution of motorized or non-motorized recreation). Therefore, the revised Forest Plan does include and acknowledge that non-motorized uses may have an impact on wildlife, including big game. Examples of applicable direction in the revised Forest Plan include FW-GDL-WL-08, FW-GDL-WL-09, and FW-GDL-WL-11 which limit disturbance to big game on winter range and during birthing/parturition.

Although FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02 specifically mention elk, elk security areas also provide security habitat for other wildlife species, including other big game. Therefore, other big game will benefit from the direction provided in FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02.

Alternative A will retain the existing amount of recommended wilderness and non-motorized areas. Large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in providing security, areas with lower disturbance, and connectivity of elk populations. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres motorized, 1,812,700 acres over-snow motorized) will have the least acreage allowing motorized use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motorized, 1,918,400 acres over-snow motorized), A (1,677,200 acres motorized, 1,961,100 acres over-snow motorized), and D (1,792,900 acres motorized, 1,987,700 acres over-snow motorized). These acreages reflect what will remain open to over-snow vehicle use based on closure order issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan. The desired conditions for over-snow vehicle use will have that use allowed on 1,500,700 acres under Alternative C, followed by 1,713,000 acres under Alternative B Modified, and 1,859,100 acres under Alternative D. These are the acres where the MA desired conditions allows over-snow vehicle use. These acres reflect the intent for future closures, following site-specific winter travel management. In addition to the differences in MA allocations among the alternatives, the existing area closures on the Forest will be retained under all alternatives. All alternatives have the same acreage of wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres). MA1a does not allow over-snow motorized use.

The grizzly bear Access Amendment is incorporated into the revised Forest Plan and all alternatives. The effects will therefore be the same for all alternatives. Implementation will improve security habitat for not only grizzly bears, but for elk as well. FW-DC-AR-06, although directed at providing people solitude and non-motorized experiences in remote settings, doing so will maintain or create areas that may function as security habitat for elk. FW-DC-WL-02 states that a forestwide system of large remote areas will be maintained or created, and these could function as security habitat for elk as well.

Special use permits/lands can affect the amount and quality of elk security habitat. Anything that changes the motorized route location or densities can change security habitat. Special use permits that do not change motorized routes can still affect security by increasing human presence within security areas and thereby changing the quality of those habitats.

Mineral activities can reduce the amount of elk security habitat. The footprint of the mine/mill can remove security habitat, as can the haul/supply route. Not only can the footprint of these facilities remove habitat, but the increased access and disturbance can affect habitat near these facilities.

The collection of forest products primarily occurs near open roads. Any collection that occurs away from open motorized routes may cause disturbance to elk. However, the effects are expected to be minor because most collecting occurs near open roads.

Both FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02 were updated between draft and final based on public and internal comments. They were adjusted to be as consistent as possible with Hillis et al. (1991) as well as realistic and attainable. FW-OBJ-WL-02 was adjusted to set the objective to increase by one the number of planning subunits that has at least 30 percent security, and increase by one the number of high emphasis planning subunits that have at least 50 percent security. This objective is realistic given the difficulty and long time frames it takes to plan projects, move through litigation, and finally implement the projects on the ground.

Elk has been proposed as a MIS for the revised Forest Plan due to concerns over elk security habitat. Security habitat would be defined in the glossary as “timbered stands on NFS lands at least 250 acres in size greater than 0.5 miles from open motorized routes during the hunting season and would be calculated for the area” (e.g., planning subunit) as determined at the project level. The concept of security habitat for elk (FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02) applies to the hunting season and is based on Hillis et al. (1991). The definition in the glossary that applies to FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02 has been adjusted from the definition in Hillis et al. (1991) by applying it to *open motorized routes* rather than simply *open roads*. The reasoning is that motorized trails can have the same impact on security as roads during hunting season when motorized trails may allow easier/quicker access into habitat compared to foot-travel. Motorized routes that are not open to the public for motorized use during the hunting season, including temporary roads, are considered security habitat because they do not fit the recommendations in Hillis et al. (1991; i.e., they do not provide motorized access during the hunting season). However, the impacts of non-motorized use of closed routes on elk security habitat would be considered at the project level. This is consistent with Hillis et al. (1991) and their discussion of closed roads (page 39 in Hillis et al. 1991) and potential for impacts of non-motorized use of closed roads on security habitat.

The glossary definition of elk security habitat for FW-GDL-WL-10 uses the term “timbered stand” (non-forested and seed sap stands were filtered out of the calculations for this analysis and are not considered a “timbered stand” for elk security) because many regenerated stands on the Forest contain enough horizontal cover to provide cover for elk, and at larger scales the available data is not fine enough to tease out patches of hiding cover. This may result in small patches of non-hiding cover being lumped into the security areas with analyses done at larger scales, but generally trees grow fast on the KNF and many stands have enough horizontal cover to provide hiding cover for elk. Analyses at smaller scales (e.g., project level) may be able to use more refined data, if available.

The KNF will generally use the planning subunit as the analysis unit for elk security as this was the agreed upon measurement scale through coordination with the managers of the elk populations, MFWP, and were identified by high, medium, and low emphasis during the early stages of this revision process. The map that resulted from that coordination with MFWP is included in the specialist’s report. This map may be updated during the life of the revised Forest Plan based upon continuing coordination with MFWP.

Based on FW-GDL-WL-10 and the definition of elk security habitat in the glossary, security habitat should be maintained or improved on NFS lands during the hunting season. Where possible, where management for elk would be a high emphasis as determined through coordination with the state, security habitat should be improved.

Although Hillis et al. (1991) recommended that the security analysis should not be adjusted for land ownership (page 39 in Hillis et al. 1991), FW-GDL-WL-10, FW-OBJ-WL-02, and the definition of elk security in the glossary applies only to NFS lands. This is because the Forest assumes that non-NFS lands do not contain security habitat, or if it currently does that any existing security habitat may not be retained by those other landowners. Therefore, the Forest would focus elk security habitat calculations on NFS. Any security habitat that exists on other land ownerships would be considered a bonus.

The following table displays the existing condition of elk security habitat on the Forest. Security was calculated as timber stands in blocks of habitat greater than or equal to 250 acres in size and greater than or equal to 0.5 mi from an open motorized route during the hunting season. Open motorized routes used for the calculations include all those on the Forest, as well as those adjacent to the Forest that will impact security habitat on the Forest. Security will be calculated only for those acres on the Forest and does not include acres not under NFS management. This table has been updated from that used for the draft EIS. For the draft EIS the calculations were based on blocks greater than or equal to 250 acres in size and greater than or equal to 0.5 mi from an open motorized route. For the analysis for the final EIS, these figures were further filtered by timbered stands (non-timbered and seedling/sapling areas were filtered out). This reduced the figures in the table for this final analysis compared to the draft EIS. Additionally, in order to keep FW-GDL-WL-10, FW-OBJ-WL-02, and the definition of elk security habitat in the glossary closer to the recommendations in Hillis et al. (1991), the calculations were kept to the hunting season only rather than a general “non-winter season” as used for the draft.

Many of the planning subunits on the Forest already provide at least 30 percent security habitat for elk during the hunting season (table 55). Only a few high emphasis planning subunits provide at least 50 percent security habitat for elk currently. FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02 will maintain or improve the availability of security habitat on the Forest.

**Table 55. Percent Security Habitat within the Planning Subunits on the KNF**

<b>KNF Planning Subunit</b>	<b>Fall % Security</b>
Alexander	22%
Beaver	45%
Big	31%
Billiard	43%
Boulder	20%
Bristow	13%
Buckhorn	42%
Bull	40%
Callahan	42%
Crazy	23%
Cripple	17%
Dodge	23%
Elk	31%
Fortine	19%
Grave	56%
Green	48%



<b>KNF Planning Subunit</b>	<b>Fall % Security</b>
Grizzly	49%
Ksanka	43%
Lake	56%
Lower Yaak	35%
Marten	36%
McElk	29%
McGregor	0%
McSutten	36%
McSwede	19%
Meadow	1%
Murphy	44%
Northeast Yaak	47%
Northwest Yaak	48%
O'Brien	21%
Parsnip	45%
Pilgrim	23%
Pine	35%
Pinkham	7%
Pipestone	17%
Pleasant	7%
Quartz	19%
Riverview	9%
Rock	36%
Seventeenmile	55%
South Fork Yaak	47%
Sheep	17%
Silverfish	46%
Spar	34%
Stillwater	45%
Sunday	37%
Swamp	9%
Treasure	44%
Trego	45%
Trout	57%
Twentyodd	54%
UBig	65%
Vermilion	45%
Whitepine	19%
Wigwam	56%
Wolf	17%
<b>Total Subunit Forest Service Lands</b>	<b>35%</b>

Calculations exclude waterbodies such as the Clark Fork River and Kootenai River

Christensen et al. (1993) addressed three types of considerations for big game habitat, particularly elk: habitat effectiveness, elk vulnerability, and winter range. Habitat effectiveness covers roads, special features, cover, and scale of analysis, spatial relationships, and domestic livestock. Roads, or the potential for motorized use, are addressed under the revised Forest Plan with FW-GDL-WL-10 along with the other direction discussed elsewhere that will maintain or improve the amount of habitat available with limitations on motorized access. Special features include things such as riparian habitat and movement corridors. Wet areas and riparian areas are addressed with the direction in the “Watershed, Soils, Riparian, Aquatic Habitat, and Aquatic Species” sections of the revised Forest Plan. This direction protects riparian areas. Connectivity is addressed through FW-DC-WL-17, FW-GDL-WL-12, FW-GDL-WL-13, FW-GDL-WL-14, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, MA5abc-DC-WL-01, GA-DC-WL-BUL-01, GA-DC-WL-BUL-04, GA-DC-WL-CLK-03, GA-DC-WL-FSH-01, GA-DC-WL-02, GA-DC-WL-LIB-01, GA-DC-WL-LIB-04, GA-DC-WL-TOB-02, GA-DC-WL-TOB-05, GA-DC-WL-YAK-01, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-04. Cover is managed according to FW-DC-WL-16 and the desired conditions for vegetation and fire. This analysis for the revised Forest Plan looked at the planning subunits and forestwide for the security analysis, and beyond the borders of the KNF for the cumulative effects analysis. Affects to cover/forage were analyzed at the Forest scale, with cumulative effects again looking beyond the KNF borders. Spatial relationships are address through FW-DC-WL-08, FW-OBJ-WL-02, FW-GDL-WL-10, and GA-DC-WL-FSH-02 which contain references to the distribution of habitat or specifically mention areas of intermixed ownership. Domestic livestock do not occur over much of the KNF, but their impacts will be minimized through FW-DC-GRZ-01.

Elk vulnerability covers factors such as roads, security areas, and cover management (Christensen et al. 1993). Roads and security areas are managed not only with FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02, but security for elk is also provided by FW-DC-WL-02, FW-DC-WL-04, FW-DC-WL-05, FW-STD-WL-02, FW-STD-WL-03, MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01, MA3-DC-WL-01, GA-DC-WL-CLK-02, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-03, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02, GA-DC-WL-LIB-03, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01, GA-DC-WL-TOB-03, GA-DC-WL-TOB-04, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-02. Cover, as mentioned previously, is managed according to FW-DC-WL-16 and the desired conditions for vegetation and fire.

Winter range factors include forage, cover, roads/disturbance, and livestock management (Christensen et al. 1993). Forage/cover are managed according to FW-DC-WL-16 and the desired conditions for vegetation and fire, in addition to GA-DC-WL-CLK-01, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02, GA-DC-WL-FSH-03, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-04, GA-DC-VEG-LIB-03, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02, GA-DC-WL-TOB-04, and GA-DC-YAK-03. Roads/disturbance are managed on big game winter range according to FW-GDL-WL-08, FW-GDL-WL-09, GA-DC-WL-BUL-02, GA-DC-WL-CLK-01, GA-DC-WL-FSH-02, GA-DC-WL-KOO-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-03, GA-DC-WL-LIB-02, and GA-DC-WL-TOB-04. Livestock do not occur over much of the KNF, but their impacts will be minimized through FW-DC-GRZ-01.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that

were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past management on NFS lands, particularly access management, likely impacted the amount and location of elk security habitat on the Forest. Access management has trended towards reducing the amount of motorized routes on the Forest over time. Timber management, fuels reduction, and fire suppression have impacted the amounts and pattern of forage/cover for elk and other ungulates on the Forest. Fire suppression in particular likely had the greatest influence. It likely led to the encroachment of conifers into natural openings and limited the creation of new openings that would provide foraging habitat.

All the action alternatives will contribute toward maintaining or improving elk security habitat through implementation of FW-GDL-WL-10. The Montana Statewide Elk Management Plan (MFWP 2004) does a good job of summarizing all the factors influencing elk populations in the Elk Management Units overlapping the Forest. These factors include predators, timber harvest, subdivision of private lands, noxious weeds, severe winters, and security on all land ownerships. Elk populations had been variable over the last decade covered by the Montana Statewide Elk Management Plan (MFWP 2004).

Timber harvest and fuels reduction occurring on private, state, or Canadian lands may impact the distribution, amount, and quality of big game and may impact connectivity between NFS lands. Activities on other land ownerships may degrade or improve ungulate habitat, particularly winter range on private lands. If timber harvest and fuels reduction are done to move conditions nearer to those present under natural disturbance processes, then ungulate habitat will be maintained/improved. However, if conditions are not maintained or restored to those found under natural disturbance processes, winter range can be degraded. Subdivision of winter range on private lands can lead to loss of winter range for native ungulates. Fuels reduction near these homes has the potential to degrade winter range, as discussed above. The desired conditions for vegetation in the revised Forest Plan will maintain or improve not only security habitat on the Forest, but also cover/forage for native ungulates. Vegetation management that trend towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation on the Forest will move conditions nearer to what will have been present under natural disturbance processes. Therefore the amount and pattern of ungulate habitat, including winter range, on the Forest will be similar to conditions that ungulates evolved with under natural disturbance processes.

Any construction of roads on other land ownerships, as well as subdivision and development, may decrease security habitat not only on those lands, but also on the immediately adjacent NFS lands.

Private land development and increased road densities or increased use of existing roads can impact connectivity. Vehicle-elk collisions can cause direct mortality to elk as well.

Climate change will likely have little impact on the motorized route aspect of elk security habitat. However, it may have an impact on vegetation and therefore the timber stand component of security habitat. Past fire suppression has increased stand densities and decreased the resiliency of some stands to large-scale disturbance (fire, insects, and disease). Climate change

may increase the likelihood of large-scale disturbance. However, moving stand conditions towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation will decrease stand densities and increase their resiliency to large-scale disturbance. Habitat conditions will be nearer to what would be present under natural disturbance processes. The timbered stand component of security habitat for elk will be nearer to what was present historically, and will be more resilient to large-scale disturbance and the impacts of climate change. Climate change may impact the timing of elk use of particular areas (i.e., change the timing of movement between seasonal ranges, page 92 in USDA 2010).

Hunting, managed by the state, can impact elk populations. Depending on the management goals, hunting regulations can lead to decreasing, increasing, or stable populations. Diseases, such as chronic wasting disease, can also impact elk populations and cause a decline. Severe weather can impact herds and cause a decline.

### *Effects Determination*

The action alternatives may impact security habitat and the vegetative components of cover/forage for elk. This determination is based in part on:

- Many planning subunits on the Forest already provide at least 30 percent security habitat for elk. Only a few high emphasis planning subunits have more than 50 percent security;
- Based on FW-GDL-WL-10, security habitat will be maintained or increased over the life of the Forest Plan;
- During the winter period, FW-GDL-WL-08 and 09 are designed to minimize or avoid disturbance to big game on winter ranges, and FW-GDL-WL-11 reduces disturbance on calving areas;
- In addition to the desired conditions for vegetation and fire, habitat connectivity will be improved through FW-DC-WL-17, and FW-GDL-WL-12 through 14;
- Additional direction within the revised Forest Plan that contributes to security habitat for elk, provides areas with low levels of disturbance during the rest of the year, or improves the vegetation components of elk habitat includes: GA-DC-WL-CLK-01 and 02; GA-DC-WL-FSH-02 and 03; GA-DC-WL-KOO-01, 03, and 04; GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03; and GA-DC-WL-TOB-01 and 04; and GA-DC-WL-YAK-03. These either specifically mention maintaining security habitat for big game within specific GAs, or will decrease disturbance or maintain the vegetation components of big game habitat;
- Connectivity will be also improved by: GA-DC-WL-CLK-03, GA-DC-WL-FSH-01, GA-DC-KOO-02, GA-DC-WL-LIB-01, GA-DC-WL-TOB-02, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-01;
- Wilderness areas (MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01), IRAs, and other non-motorized areas (FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, FW-GDL-WL-10, MA3-DC-WL-01, and MA5abc-DC-WL-01) contribute to secure habitat and connectivity for elk; and
- Habitat for native ungulates will be managed in coordination with state agencies, with cover/forage managed based on the desired conditions for vegetation in the revised Plan (FW-DC-WL-16).

### *Landbird Assemblage (Insectivore)*

The insectivore assemblage would be a MIS for vegetation change associated with timber harvest and fuels reduction. This MIS would be used to analyze progress towards the desired conditions for vegetation. This assemblage consists of olive-sided flycatcher, dusky flycatcher, Hammond's flycatcher, chipping sparrow, and hairy woodpecker; all of which were detected on

the Forest during the Landbird Monitoring Program conducted by the Avian Science Center (<http://globe.gcs-holdings.net/avian/GoogleMap.aspx?project=LBMP>). A review of the literature shows that landbirds can have varied responses (densities) to thinning and burning treatments such as those that would be expected in order to move towards the desired conditions for vegetation (Gaines et al. 2007, Gaines et al. 2010, Saab et al. 2007). Hammond's flycatcher was included because it uses mature coniferous forests, and the hairy woodpecker was included because it uses snags for foraging and nesting.

Not only are the effects from the desired conditions for vegetation/fire analyzed, but the effects from other direction in the revised Forest Plan on this landbird assemblage were analyzed as well.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes). The ERG analysis (ERG 2012) looked at vegetation changes over the next 50 years.

### **Affected Environment**

Chipping sparrow, hairy woodpecker, Hammond's flycatcher, olive-sided flycatcher, and dusky flycatcher population biology, ecology, habitat description, and relationships are described in the Birds of North America Online database (<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna>). Additional information is provided at the NatureServe database (<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/index.htm>).

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

The following information came from the NatureServe database (<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/index.htm>) and the Birds of North America Online database (<http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna>):

The chipping sparrow prefers open, coniferous woodlands, edges near openings, and early-successional forests with shrubs. They feed in low vegetation or on the ground for insects and the seeds of grasses and annuals.

The hairy woodpecker uses coniferous forests, including mature forests, along with edges and burned areas. They utilize cavities in snags for nesting. They primarily feed on insects found on the surface or subsurface of trees.

The Hammond's flycatcher uses mature coniferous forests that contain canopy openings. They primarily capture aerial insects by flycatching.

The olive-sided flycatcher uses open coniferous forests, edges near openings, or early-successional forests if they contain residual conifers or snags to provide singing and foraging perches. They primarily capture aerial insects by flycatching.

The dusky flycatcher uses open coniferous forests, open areas with scattered trees, and brushy areas. They primarily capture aerial insects by flycatching.

Table 56 displays two of the relevant scenarios modeled for chipping sparrow and dusky flycatcher habitat (ERG 2012). ERG modeled several scenarios for comparison purposes. The

existing 1987 Forest Plan was modeled, as was a “no treatment” scenario where no mechanical treatment was modeled. This was done for comparison purposes and to put management under the 1987 Forest Plan into context. Both consider a warmer/drier climate over the next five decades as the climate changes. Both of these scenarios also considered that the current level of fire suppression would continue into the future and both considered an increase in acres burned over time due to a warmer/drier climate and fuel loads. The existing amount of habitat is within HRV and increases over the next five decades.

**Table 56. Acres of Chipping Sparrow and Dusky Flycatcher Habitat**

Decade	1987 Forest Plan	No Treatment Scenario
0	218,218	218,218
1	237,438	233,244
2	264,322	262,045
5	275,500	276,466

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Both scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

Table 57 displays two of the relevant scenarios modeled for olive-sided flycatcher habitat (ERG 2012). The existing amount of habitat is within HRV and remains within HRV over the next five decades.

**Table 57. Acres of Olive-sided Flycatcher Habitat**

Decade	1987 Forest Plan	No Treatment Scenario
0	1,474,772	1,474,772
1	1,249,930	1,245,364
2	1,192,221	1,195,519
5	1,123,404	1,111,837

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Both scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

Table 58 displays two of the relevant scenarios for Hammond’s flycatcher habitat (ERG 2012). The existing amount of habitat is below HRV but increases towards HRV over the next five decades.

**Table 58. Acres of Hammond’s Flycatcher Habitat**

Decade	1987 Forest Plan	No Treatment Scenario
0	528,684	528,684
1	451,743	467,160
2	483,538	521,051
5	681,760	694,720

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Both scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

Table 59 displays two of the relevant scenarios for hairy woodpecker habitat (ERG 2012). The existing amount of habitat is at the high end of HRV and increases over the next five decades.

**Table 59. Acres of Hairy Woodpecker Habitat**

Decade	1987 Forest Plan	No Treatment Scenario
0	1,752,715	1,752,715
1	1,685,835	1,700,544
2	1,663,915	1,665,891
5	1,868,565	1,893,620

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Both scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

### *Key Stressors*

These stressors can cause habitat loss, displacement, or mortality.

General stressors (could occur on other land ownerships):

- Decline in availability of large snags and trees for perching and nesting;
- Fire suppression that results in dense young stands, encroachment of conifers into openings, and loss of open-forest structure;
- Selective timber harvesting with subsequent replanting of closely spaced seedlings;
- Intensive grazing that may remove the shrub and grass understory;
- Alteration or loss of wintering habitat; and
- Wind turbines – mortality on migratory birds.

The following Forest Service management activities may impact insectivores or their habitat (indirect effects):

- Timber harvest – loss of snags and large trees;
- Fire (both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) – removal of standing snags or direct mortality, although fire also maintains open habitat and creates snags;
- Fire suppression – loss of openings and open-forest structure;
- Road maintenance and construction – habitat loss; facilitates firewood harvest, and loss of snags; and
- Recreational use – habitat loss or disturbance.

The population levels of the species in this landbird assemblage are determined in part by the stressors occurring on other land ownerships. The activities that the Forest undertakes do not solely determine the population levels of these species on the Forest.

## **Environmental Consequences**

### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Fire/Vegetation Management:** Fire suppression has degraded habitat for members of this assemblage. Alternative A will be more likely than the action alternatives to result in continued suppression of most fires. Under the action alternatives there is more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. Dry forest stands that once had more frequent fires and generally had a more open understory now have more ladder fuels than would have been present under natural disturbance. This increases the chance that a large-scale disturbance (e.g., fire, insects) would impact habitat. The Forest is generally lacking ponderosa pine and larch, as shown in FW-DC-VEG-11. In order to move towards historic conditions, as shown in FW-DC-

VEG-11, active restoration may need to occur to thin stands before fire can be reintroduced into some ecosystems. Doing so will make those stands more resilient to large-scale disturbance. It will also create and maintain the open habitats that members of this assemblage use.

All three action alternatives trend vegetation conditions towards desired conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-10, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-GDL-VEG-03 through 06, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), which are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes. Vegetation conditions, under all action alternatives, will be maintained or improved for insectivores and their prey in the long-term, by creating a more resilient landscape. The difference between the alternatives will be primarily how much vegetation treatment would be predicted each year to trend conditions toward the desired conditions for vegetation.

Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

Given the limited progress towards the desired conditions that can be made given the predicted budgets, the use of fire is more effective at moving towards the desired conditions. Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) will be more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will be more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. This will be useful to maintain/restore insectivore habitat in the long-term.

The increased use of fire, both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions, will maintain or improve the pattern of insectivore habitat across the Forest. Managing for the desired conditions for vegetation (historic conditions) will likely result in a pattern of insectivore habitat similar to what was found historically under natural disturbance processes.

"Perhaps the single greatest challenge for forest managers nationwide is the restoration of fire regimes as a vital component of healthy forest ecosystems. Many forest types, as well as birds and other wildlife of high conservation concern, require natural fire cycles, and a century of



unnatural fire suppression has created conditions that are not only harmful to bird populations, but also pose grave economic and safety threats to humans" (NABCI 2011).

GA direction that assists in trending towards the desired conditions for vegetation and fire includes: GA-DC-VEG-CLK-01, GA-DC-VEG-FSH-01, GA-DC-VEG-KOO-01, GA-DC-VEG-LIB-03, and GA-DC-VEG-TOB-01.

Under current management (Alternative A), the percentage of the Forest with high snag densities will increase over the next five decades. The percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 78 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 35 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 36 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative B Modified, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 81 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 36 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative C, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 76 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 83 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 37 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 39 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative D, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will remain steady from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 73 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and increase from 73 percent to 80 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 34 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

The large/very large size class is currently below desired conditions (historic conditions) by approximately 221,900 acres on the Forest. With unconstrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+128,011 acres), C (+127,165 acres), D (+77,382 acres), and A (+54,032 acres). With constrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+134,742 acres), D (+132,481 acres), C (+129,377 acres), and A (+110,286 acres). All of these increases will push the amount of large/very large size class acres towards the desired conditions. A lot of the middle size class becomes large/very large over the next 50 years.

This means that insectivores will find an increase of stands in the large/very large size class and adequate snags under all alternatives in the next 50 years.

Table 60 displays some of the relevant scenarios jointly modeled for chipping sparrow and dusky flycatcher habitat (ERG 2012). The existing amount of habitat is within HRV and increases over the next five decades under all the alternatives. The alternatives are similar in outcomes.

Increases in habitat are due to increasing low/moderate severity fire. There is no indication that these two species are at a viability risk (page 90 in ERG 2012).

**Table 60. Acres of Chipping Sparrow and Dusky Flycatcher Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified	1987 Forest Plan	No Treatment Scenario
0	218,218	218,218	218,218
1	245,943	237,438	233,244
2	262,771	264,322	262,045
5	293,485	275,500	276,466

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

Table 61 displays some of the relevant scenarios of modeled for olive-sided flycatcher habitat (ERG 2012). The existing amount of habitat is within HRV and remains within HRV over the next five decades. The alternatives have similar outcomes. The changes in habitat are driven by wildfires, insects, and root disease. There is no indication of a viability risk to olive-sided flycatcher (page 94 in ERG 2012).

**Table 61. Acres of Olive-sided Flycatcher Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified	1987 Forest Plan	No Treatment Scenario
0	1,474,772	1,474,772	1,474,772
1	1,249,483	1,249,930	1,245,364
2	1,170,844	1,192,221	1,195,519
5	1,178,232	1,123,404	1,111,837

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

Table 62 displays some of the relevant scenarios modeled for Hammond's flycatcher habitat (ERG 2012). The existing amount of habitat is below HRV but increases towards HRV over the next five decades. The alternatives have similar outcomes. The changes in habitat are driven by forest growth offset by wildfire. There is no indication that there is a viability risk to Hammond's flycatcher (page 93 in ERG 2012).

**Table 62. Acres of Hammond's Flycatcher Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified	1987 Forest Plan	No Treatment Scenario
0	528,684	528,684	528,684
1	452,450	451,743	467,160
2	484,102	483,538	521,051
5	683,186	681,760	694,720

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

Table 63 displays two of the relevant scenarios modeled for hairy woodpecker habitat (ERG 2012). The existing amount of habitat is at the high end of HRV and increases over the next five decades. The alternatives result in similar outcomes. The increase in habitat is driven by

extensive rood disease, insect outbreaks, and fire. There is no indication that hairy woodpeckers are at a viability risk (page 92 in ERG 2012).

**Table 63. Acres of Hairy Woodpecker Habitat**

Decade	Alternative B Modified	1987 Forest Plan	No Treatment Scenario
0	1,752,715	1,752,715	1,752,715
1	1,685,667	1,685,835	1,700,544
2	1,657,260	1,663,915	1,665,891
5	1,859,910	1,868,565	1,893,620

Source: Ecosystem Research Group (2012). Scenarios consider a warmer/drier climate and a continuance of the current level of fire suppression

For the landbird assemblage, as with wildlife on the Forest in general, it is wildfire, insects/disease, in-growth, and stand succession that largely determines the amount and pattern of habitat on the Forest for these species rather than management activities (pages ES-1 and ES-2 in ERG 2012).

These insectivores are not dependent on old growth. However, for those species that use mature forests, old growth can contribute to available habitat (FW-STD-VEG-01 and 02, FW-GDL-VEG-01 and 02).

Additional directions in the revised Forest Plan that will benefit members of this group by maintaining or improving habitat include: FW-DC-WL-09 through 14, FW-GDL-WL-05, and FW-DC-GRZ-01.

The direction in the Forest Plan maintains/improves the habitat components this group uses, including snags, mature forest, openings/edge habitat, and open forest. By trending towards the desired conditions for vegetation and fire, the Forest will provide a similar diversity of habitats and pattern across the Forest as would have been found historically under natural disturbance processes. That means the species in this group will find an amount and arrangement of habitats similar to what they evolved with on the Forest. Additionally, stands will be more resilient to large-scale disturbance (fire, insects, and disease).

Grazing can reduce the shrub and grass component of open forest stands. This reduces the ground fuels useful to carry the frequent fires that maintain dry forests. It also reduces the understory vegetation component that provides habitat for some of the invertebrate species that this group feeds on. FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will occur at sustainable levels while protecting resources.

**Access/Disturbance:** Alternative A will retain the existing amount of recommended wilderness and non-motorized areas. Large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in providing security and connectivity. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres motor vehicle) will have the least acreage allowing motor vehicle use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motor vehicle), A (1,677,200 acres motor vehicle), and D (1,792,900 acres motor vehicle). All alternatives have the same acreage of designated wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres).

MA5 can also contribute to security. Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

Human access can cause individuals of this assemblage to be displaced from the vicinity of the disturbance. This effect is more common along open roadways as that is where most of the human presence will be concentrated. Additionally, access via open roads facilitates firewood cutting, and results in a loss of snags near roadways. The loss of snags will make the areas around open roads even less desirable for some members of this assemblage. All alternatives will improve access conditions for this assemblage through application of the Access Amendment for grizzly bears. Some roads will be closed and therefore decrease the acreage potentially affected by woodcutting and high human disturbance.

The primary impact from special use permits will likely be disturbance. However, some habitat loss or alteration may also occur. Mineral development could lead to the loss of habitat and increased human presence and therefore disturbance to members of this assemblage in the vicinity of the activities. Individuals may be displaced to habitat elsewhere on the Forest. The footprint of a mine and mill may decrease available habitat by removing live trees and snags. The collection of forest products will result in a loss of habitat and human presence/disturbance that could displace individuals of this assemblage. Firewood cutting in particular will result in a loss of snag habitat along open roadways. The collection of other forest products besides firewood gathering also tends to be associated with open roads due to the ease of access. The snag loss in particular will reduce the suitability of habitat near open roadways for some species in this assemblage.

Vegetation/fire management activities can also cause short-term disturbance, although there will be long-term habitat improvements/maintenance.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression are the most likely past activities that influenced the amount and distribution of bird habitat on NFS lands. Fire suppression in particular is likely to have changed stand structure and led to encroachment of conifers into natural openings and increased tree densities in formerly open canopied stands. Open roads likely impacted the distribution of snags due to firewood cutting. Road influences have decreased over time as access management has resulted in less routes open to motor vehicle use.

Climate change will have the potential to alter the quality, quantity, or distribution of habitat for this assemblage. A changing climate and the effects of past fire suppression may combine to lower the resiliency of stands to natural disturbance processes. There is a greater likelihood that a large scale disturbance will change habitat for this assemblage. Although some members of this assemblage may do well after a large fire or disturbance, others will not. Moving conditions nearer to historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation will restore or maintain habitat into a more resilient condition and nearer to what would have been present historically.

under natural disturbance processes. Climate change may cause a change in timing of the life-cycle of some insects, consequently altering when prey is available for this assemblage (page 90 in USDA 2010).

Grazing will continue on other ownerships, and if it reduces the availability of grasses and shrubs there may be a reduction in some invertebrate prey species. It may also reduce the ground fuels useful to facilitate frequent fires in some portions of some ecosystems.

Effects in wintering areas or during migration can reduce populations of the members of this assemblage. Wind turbines, for example, can kill individuals during migration.

### *Effects Determination*

The action alternatives **may impact** this assemblage and their habitat. This determination is based in part on:

- All three action alternatives trend vegetation conditions towards desired conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-10, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-GDL-VEG-03 through 06), which are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes. Vegetation conditions, under all action alternatives, will be maintained or improved for insectivores and their prey in the long-term, at the very least by creating a more resilient landscape;
- Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year in Alternative A;
- MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. This will be useful to maintain/restore insectivore habitat in the long-term;
- The increased use of fire, both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions, will maintain or improve the pattern of insectivore habitat across the Forest. Managing for the desired conditions for vegetation (historic conditions) will likely result in a pattern of insectivore habitat similar to what was found historically under natural disturbance processes;
- There is no indication that a change in habitat relative to HRV over the next five decades under the revised Forest Plan is a viability risk to any of these species (ERG 2012); and
- Vegetation/fire management activities can also cause short-term disturbance, although there would be long-term habitat improvements/maintenance.

## Other Species or Habitat Components

### *Migratory Birds*

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

On January 10, 2001, President Clinton signed an Executive Order (13186) titled “Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds.” The executive order states that environmental analysis of federal actions, required by NEPA or other established environmental review processes, evaluate the effects of actions and agency plans on migratory birds, with emphasis on species of concern.

A MOU between the Forest Service and USFWS was signed in 2008 (USDA and USFWS 2008) (FS Agreement #08-MU-1113-2400-264). The MOU outlines the responsibilities for both parties regarding migratory birds, including the Forest Service’s responsibilities regarding consideration of migratory birds in NEPA projects. The MOU was used to help guide the development of this effects analysis.

In January of 2000 the Forest Service released a Landbird Strategic Plan (USDA Forest Service 2000). The primary purpose of the strategic plan was to provide very general guidance for the agency’s landbird conservation program. Among the suggested actions was the incorporation of landbird management into Forest Plans.

A recent report issued by several organizations and federal agencies summarized the general condition of birds across the United States (North American Bird Conservation Initiative 2009, 2011). It painted a picture of declines in multiple species across a variety of habitats. Climate change was one of the contributing factors to these declines, and is likely to continue impacting birds into the future. As the climate warms, breeding seasons and migrations are being altered. These activities may become out of sync with prey abundance, and climate change may also impact where and when those food items are available. This reinforces the need to have resilient habitat that is better able to handle climate change.

The following series of tables were included to provide a framework to focus the discussion and analysis by focusing on migratory bird priority species/habitats.

Partners in Flight produced a North American Landbird Conservation Plan in 2004 (Rich et al. 2004). Their plan was broken down by “biomes” and the Forest is located within the Intermountain West Avifaunal Biome, which includes several Bird Conservation Regions and encompasses several western states. Their plan is very broad in scale. Table 64 displays the species they identified for continental importance within the Intermountain West Avifaunal Biome.

**Table 64. Species of Continental Importance Identified for the Intermountain West Avifaunal Biome in the Partners in Flight North American Landbird Conservation Plan (Rich et al. 2004)**

Species	Primary Habitat	Is the Forest within the Range of the Species? <sup>1</sup>
<b>Immediate Action<sup>2</sup></b>		
Bendire's Thrasher	Western shrublands	N
California Condor	Various	N
Greater Sage-Grouse	Western shrublands	N
Gunnison Sage-Grouse	Western shrublands	N
Spotted Owl	Coniferous Forest	N
<b>Management<sup>3</sup></b>		
Black Swift	Various	Y
Brewer's Sparrow	Western shrublands	Y
Cassin's Finch	Coniferous forest	Y
Grace's Warbler	Mixed forest	N
Lewis's Woodpecker	Riparian	Y
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Coniferous forest	Y
Pinyon Jay	Woodland	N
Rufous Hummingbird	Western shrublands	Y
Swainson's Hawk	Grassland	Y
White-throated Swift	Various	Y
Willow Flycatcher	Riparian	Y
<b>Long-term Planning and Responsibility<sup>4</sup></b>		
Black Rosy-Finch	Tundra	N
Brown-capped Rosy-Finch	Tundra	N
Calliope Hummingbird	Western shrublands	Y
Clark's Nutcracker	Coniferous forest	Y
Dusky Flycatcher	Western shrublands	Y
Flammulated Owl	Coniferous forest	Y
Gray Flycatcher	Woodland	N
Gray Vireo	Woodland	N
Green-tailed Towhee	Western shrublands	N
McCown's Longspur	Grassland	N
Mountain Bluebird	Western shrublands	Y
Red-naped Sapsucker	Mixed forest	Y
Sage Sparrow	Western shrublands	N
Sage Thrasher	Western shrublands	N
Virginia's Warbler	Woodland	N
White-headed Woodpecker	Coniferous forest	Y
Williamson's Sapsucker	Coniferous forest	Y

<sup>1</sup> NatureServe Explorer <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/index.htm> on 9/20/10 or KIPZ MIS Process and AMS Technical Report in the project record; includes accidental, migratory, or transient occurrences

<sup>2</sup> PIF categorized species by the level of immediacy of conservation attention. Those in the "immediate action" category are identified to reverse/stabilize significant long-term population declines, or to protect species with the smallest populations with unknown population trends (page 25 in Rich et al. 2004). None of these species occur on the Forest

<sup>3</sup> PIF categorized species by the level of immediacy of conservation attention. Those in the “management” category are identified because management/conservation actions are needed to halt long-term population declines or sustain vulnerable populations (page 26 in Rich et al. 2004). The Forest is within the range of nine of these species

<sup>4</sup> PIF categorized species by the level of immediacy of conservation attention. Those in the “long-term planning and responsibility” category are identified because planning is needed to maintain populations. The Forest is within the range of seven of these species

Partners in Flight’s North American Landbird Conservation Plan (Rich et al. 2004) does not contain a set of requirements that the Forest must follow, and the document was used to organize the discussion in this analysis by focusing on those species/habitats that have been identified at a broad scale as being important. It was essentially used to provide a framework, along with the following documents, to facilitate discussion of migratory landbirds within this analysis by focusing on key species and habitats.

Two documents (USFWS 2008 and PIF 2000) provide a narrower focused look at key birds and habitats as those documents pertain on a smaller area (a single Bird Conservation Region or State). Again, these documents and the following tables were used as a framework to facilitate the discussion/analysis of migratory landbirds and their habitats by focusing on key species and habitats.

In 2008 the USFWS released a report titled “Birds of Conservation Concern” in which they listed species of concern by Bird Conservation Regions (BCR) (USFWS 2008). That report helps focus conservation effort on the species that need it. The Forest lies within BCR 10 (Northern Rockies). Table 65 lists the species of concern for that BCR, not all of which are found on the Forest.

**Table 65. Birds of Conservation Concern for the Bird Conservation Region that overlaps the Forest (Bird Conservation Region 10 = Northern Rockies)**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Is the Forest w/in the Range of Species?*
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Y
Black Rosy-Finch	<i>Leucosticte atrata</i>	N
Black Swift	<i>Cypseloides niger</i>	Y
Brewer’s Sparrow	<i>Spizella breweri</i>	Y
Calliope Hummingbird	<i>Stellula calliope</i>	Y
Cassin’s Finch	<i>Carpodacus cassinii</i>	Y
Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	Y
Flammulated Owl	<i>Otus flammeolus</i>	Y
Lewis’s Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	Y
Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Y
Long-Billed Curlew	<i>Numenius americanus</i>	Y
McCown’s Longspur	<i>Calcarius mccownii</i>	N
Olive-Sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	Y
Peregrine Falcon (b)	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Y
Sage Sparrow	<i>Amphispiza belli</i>	N
Sage Thrasher	<i>Oreoscoptes montanus</i>	N
Swainson’s Hawk	<i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	Y
Upland Sandpiper	<i>Bartramia longicauda</i>	Y



Common Name	Scientific Name	Is the Forest w/in the Range of Species?*
White-Headed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides albolarvatus</i>	Y
Williamson's Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus thyroideus</i>	Y
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>	Y
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	N

b = breeding

\*NatureServe: Explorer <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/index.htm> on 9/20/10 or KIPZ MIS Process and AMS Technical Report in the project record; includes accidental, migratory, or transient occurrences

Four of these species are additionally analyzed elsewhere in this document: bald eagle, peregrine falcon, flammulated owl, and olive-sided flycatcher.

The KNF is within the Partners in Flight Montana Conservation Plan (PIF 2000). These conservation strategies are recommendations to use in management but they are not binding requirements. However, they provide a way to categorize and analyze important migratory bird habitat and species. The use of these plans supports the goal of maintaining long-term sustainability of migratory bird species and their habitats as specified by the Executive Order and Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. The priority habitats and species are listed below. This document and the following table (table 66) were used to provide a framework to focus the discussion and analysis by focusing on priority species and habitats.

**Table 66. Partners in Flight Priority Habitats/Species for Montana (PIF 2000)**

Partners in Flight Priority Habitats and Species			
Habitat	Species	Priority Level <sup>1</sup>	Is the Forest w/in the Range of Species? <sup>2</sup>
<b>Grassland</b>			
Mixed Grass Prairie	Mountain plover	I	N
	Burrowing owl	I	Y
	Sprague's pipit	I	N
	Baird's sparrow	I	Y
	Ferruginous hawk	II	Y
	Long-billed curlew	II	Y
	Lark bunting	II	Y
	Grasshopper sparrow	II	Y
	McCown's longspur	II	N
	Chestnut-collared longspur	II	N
	Northern harrier	III	Y
	Short-eared owl	III	Y
	Bobolink	III	Y
Intermountain Grasslands	Columbian sharp-tailed grouse	II	Y
<b>Shrubland</b>			
Sagebrush Shrubsteppe	Sage grouse	I	N
	Loggerhead shrike	II	Y

Partners in Flight Priority Habitats and Species			
Habitat	Species	Priority Level <sup>1</sup>	Is the Forest w/in the Range of Species? <sup>2</sup>
	Brewer's sparrow	II	Y
	Sage thrasher	III	N
	Lark sparrow	III	Y
Montane Shrubland	Calliope hummingbird	II	Y
	Nashville warbler	III	Y
	MacGillivray's warbler	III	Y
	Lazuli bunting	II	Y
	Common poorwill	III	N
	Green-tailed towhee	III	N
	Clay-colored sparrow	III	Y
<b>Forest</b>			
Dry Forest	Flammulated owl	I	Y
	Lewis's woodpecker	II	Y
	Blue grouse	III	Y
	Chipping sparrow	III	Y
	Cassin's finch	III	Y
	Red crossbill	III	Y
Cedar Hemlock	Brown creeper	I	Y
	Vaux's swift	II	Y
	Winter wren	II	Y
	Chestnut-backed chickadee	III	Y
	Golden-crowned kinglet	III	Y
	Varied thrush	III	Y
Burned Forest	Black-backed woodpecker	I	Y
	Olive-sided flycatcher	I	Y
	Three-toed woodpecker	II	Y
	Townsend's solitaire	III	Y
Moist Douglas-fir/Grand fir	Northern goshawk	II	Y
	Williamson's sapsucker	II	Y
	Sharp-shinned hawk	III	Y
	Pileated woodpecker	II	Y
	Plumbeous/Cassin's vireos	III	N/Y
	Townsend's warbler	III	Y
Whitebark pine	Clark's nutcracker	III	Y
Aspen	Ruffed grouse	II	Y
	Red-naped sapsucker	II	Y
	Ovenbird	III	Y
Wet Subalpine fir (spruce/fir)	Great gray owl	III	Y
	Boreal owl	III	Y
Limber Pine/Juniper	N/A		

Partners in Flight Priority Habitats and Species			
Habitat	Species	Priority Level <sup>1</sup>	Is the Forest w/in the Range of Species? <sup>2</sup>
Dry Subalpine fir/Lodgepole pine	N/A		
<b>Riparian</b>			
Riparian Deciduous Forest (Cottonwood/Aspen)	Interior least tern	I	N
	Barrow's goldeneye	II	Y
	Hooded merganser	II	Y
	Bald eagle	II	Y
	Black-billed cuckoo	II	N
	Yellow-billed cuckoo	II	N
	Red-headed woodpecker	II	N
	Cordilleran flycatcher	II	Y
	Veery	II	Y
	Red-eyed vireo	II	Y
	Killdeer	III	Y
	Eastern screech owl	III	N
	Western screech owl	III	Y
	Downy woodpecker	III	Y
	Least flycatcher	III	Y
	American redstart	III	Y
	MacGillivray's warbler	III	Y
	Orchard oriole	III	Y
Riparian Shrub	Willow flycatcher	II	Y
	Rufous hummingbird	III	Y
	Gray catbird	III	Y
	Warbling vireo	III	Y
	Song sparrow	III	Y
Hardwood Draws	Swainson's hawk	III	Y
Riparian Coniferous Forest	Harlequin duck	I	Y
	Hammond's flycatcher	II	Y
	American dipper	III	Y
<b>Wetlands</b>			
Prairie Pothole	Piping plover	I	N
	Horned grebe	II	Y
	White-faced ibis	II	Y
	Marbled godwit	II	Y
	Franklin's gull	II	Y
	Forster's tern	II	Y
	Black tern	II	Y
	Clark's grebe	III	N
	Black-crowned night heron	III	N
	Black-necked stilt	III	Y

Partners in Flight Priority Habitats and Species			
Habitat	Species	Priority Level <sup>1</sup>	Is the Forest w/in the Range of Species? <sup>2</sup>
	Willet	III	N
	Wilson's phalarope	III	Y
	LeConte's sparrow	III	Y
	Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow	III	N
Intermountain Valley Wetlands	Common loon	I	Y
	Trumpeter swan	I	N
	Common tern	II	Y
	American bittern	III	Y
	Yellow-headed blackbird	III	Y
Irrigation Reservoirs >640 ac	Caspian tern	II	Y
	American white pelican	III	Y
Irrigation Reservoirs <640 ac	Transient shorebirds	II	Y
High Elevation Wetlands	N/A		
Unique Habitats	Peregrine falcon	II	Y
	Black swift	II	Y
	Black rosy finch	II	N
	White-tailed ptarmigan	III	Y
	Chimney swift	III	N
	Red-winged blackbird	III	Y
	Brewer's blackbird	III	Y

<sup>1</sup> Montana Priority Levels (PIF) uses a priority system rather than producing planning information about all species. Their assumption is that if conservation measures are focused on the identified species/habitats then other species will benefit as well (page 23 in PIF 2000). The priority levels are: (I) Conservation Action – species with declining populations or high area importance, (II) Monitoring Species – species in need but with lesser threat or stable/increasing populations in Montana, (III) Local Concern – species of concern which are not in imminent risk or are near-obligates for high priority habitats, (IV) Non-priority – rare migrants, extremely peripheral occurrence, or lack of imminent risk and are not included in the PIF conservation planning effort (pages 24-25 in PIF 2000)

<sup>2</sup> NatureServe Explorer <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/index.htm> on 9/20/10 or KIPZ MIS Process and AMS Technical Report in the project record; includes accidental, migratory, or transient occurrences

The habitat requirements of the species listed above, as well as range information, can be found online at NatureServe Explorer's database: <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/index.htm>. Population estimates can be found on the Partners in Flight online database: [http://rmbo.org/pif\\_db/laped/](http://rmbo.org/pif_db/laped/).

Several of these birds are additionally analyzed elsewhere in the document: flammulated owl, chipping sparrow, black-backed woodpecker, olive-sided flycatcher, Hammond's flycatcher, common loon, harlequin duck, and peregrine falcon.

Most of the habitats found on the Forest host one or more species of migratory birds. Generally speaking, the birds arrive in the spring to set up territories for breeding purposes. Young are raised and fledged by mid-summer. Most species leave the Forest by mid- to late summer.

Table 67 displays the dominant vegetation types for the KNF. There is some overlap in categories, and therefore some double-counting. For example, some acres counted as "riparian"

would also be counted under the other forested types. Additionally, specific tree species may be found in more than one category, although for the purpose of display they were placed in only one category. Tree species may also be found in several other forest types. For example, aspen is displayed as a separate category, although aspen can be found in smaller quantities scattered throughout the other forested types. The available vegetation data on the Forest was grouped into categories that matched the above listed priority landbird habitats as closely as possible.

**Table 67. Dominant Vegetation Type for the KNF based on FIA Subplots, Vegetation Response Units, VMP Organized to Approximate the PIF Priority Habitats**

Dominant Vegetation Type	Estimated % of KNF <sup>1</sup>	Estimated Acres
Dry forest (ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir)	29	643,845
Lodgepole pine	15	328,794
Cedar/western hemlock	6	130,038
Subalpine fir (spruce/fir)	20	441,198
Moist grand fir	4	83,520
Aspen/birch/cottonwood	1	13,744
Misc. forest (alpine larch, mountain hemlock, western larch, white pine, intolerant mix)	17	374,256
Whitebark pine	<1	8,458
Waterbodies (lakes, ponds, reservoirs, marsh, swamp, river)	<1	5,177
Riparian (INFISH)	12	257,082
Grassland	2	48,598
Shrubland	4	96,658
Burned forest	<1	8,246*
Non vegetation	1	13,315

<sup>1</sup> Percentages and acreages do not tally to 100% due to rounding and overlap between some of the categories leading to double-counting

\*Recently burned, un-harvested acres based on 2003-2009 fires and 2003-2010 harvest. For species such as the black-backed woodpecker, recently burned forests are the most suitable habitat.

## Key Stressors

These stressors can cause habitat loss, displacement, or mortality.

### General Stressors:

- Decline in availability of large snags and trees for perching and nesting;
- Fire suppression that results in dense young stands, encroachment of conifers into openings, and loss of open-forest structure;
- Selective timber harvesting with subsequent replanting of closely spaced seedlings;
- Intensive grazing that may remove the shrub and grass understory;
- Alteration or loss of wintering habitat; and
- Wind turbines – mortality on migratory birds.

The following Forest Service management activities may impact migratory birds or their habitat (indirect effects):

- Timber harvest – loss of snags and large trees;
- Fire (both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions) – removal of standing snags or direct mortality, although fire also maintains open habitat and creates snags;
- Fire suppression – loss of openings and open-forest structure;
- Road maintenance and construction – habitat loss, facilitates firewood harvest, and loss of snags; and
- Recreational use – habitat loss or disturbance.

### **Environmental Consequences**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Fire/Vegetation Management:** Fire suppression has degraded habitat for migratory birds. Alternative A is more likely than the action alternatives to result in continued suppression of most fires. Under the action alternatives there is more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. Dry forest stands that once had more frequent fires and generally had a more open understory now have more ladder fuels than would have been present under natural disturbance. This increases the chance that a large-scale disturbance (e.g., fire, insects) would impact habitat. The Forest is generally lacking ponderosa pine and larch, as shown in FW-DC-VEG-11. In order to move towards historic conditions, as shown in FW-DC-VEG-11, active restoration may need to occur to thin stands before fire can be reintroduced into some ecosystems. Doing so will make those stands more resilient to large-scale disturbance. It will also create and maintain the open habitats that some species use.

All three action alternatives trend vegetation conditions towards desired conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-10, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-GDL-VEG-03 through 06, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), which are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes. Vegetation conditions, under all action alternatives, will be maintained or improved for migratory birds and their habitat in the long-term, by creating a more resilient landscape. Although some species would potentially have fewer habitats, the amount and pattern would be similar to what was found under natural disturbance regimes. Fire is a natural part of these habitats, and these birds evolved in its presence. The difference between the alternatives will be primarily how much vegetation treatment will be predicted each year to trend conditions toward the desired conditions for vegetation. Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

Limited progress towards the desired conditions can be made under constrained budgets; therefore, the use of fire will be more effective at moving towards the desired conditions. Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) is more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern.

The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration or maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) is more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. This will be useful to maintain/restore migratory bird habitat in the long-term.

The increased use of fire, both planned ignitions and natural, unplanned ignitions, would maintain or improve the pattern of migratory bird habitat across the Forest. Managing for the desired conditions for vegetation (historic conditions) will likely result in a pattern of migratory bird habitat similar to what was found historically under natural disturbance processes.

"Perhaps the single greatest challenge for forest managers nationwide is the restoration of fire regimes as a vital component of healthy forest ecosystems. Many forest types, as well as birds and other wildlife of high conservation concern, require natural fire cycles, and a century of unnatural fire suppression has created conditions that are not only harmful to bird populations, but also pose grave economic and safety threats to humans" (NABCI 2011).

GA direction that assists in trending towards the desired conditions for vegetation and fire includes: GA-DC-VEG-CLK-01, GA-DC-VEG-FSH-01, GA-DC-VEG-KOO-01, GA-DC-VEG-LIB-03, and GA-DC-VEG-TOB-01.

Fire can also cause mortality to birds, although most are mobile enough to escape. Timing spring burning to avoid periods when immobile young may be in the nest can reduce this impact. Fire is a natural part of these habitats, and these birds evolved in its presence. FW-DC-WL-14 will maintain a diversity of patch sizes of fire-killed trees to provide wildlife habitat, and FW-GDL-WL-05 will maintain unlogged conditions in some portions of burned areas for 5 years post-fire for those species that need this type of habitat. Allowing fire to play a more natural role in the ecosystem will maintain/restore habitat conditions for several species of birds.

For those species that use mature forests, old growth can contribute to available habitat (FW-STD-VEG-01 and 02, FW-GDL-VEG-01 and 02).

Additional directions in action alternatives that will benefit members of this group by maintaining or improving habitat include: FW-DC-WL-09 through 14, FW-GDL-WL-05, and FW-DC-GRZ-01.

All of the above direction maintains or improves the habitat components this group uses, including snags, mature forest, openings/edge habitat, and open forest. By trending towards the desired conditions for vegetation and fire, the Forest will provide a similar diversity of habitats and patterns across the Forest as would have been found historically under natural disturbance processes. That means the species in this group will find an amount and arrangement of habitats

similar to what they evolved with on the Forest. Additionally, stands will be more resilient to large-scale disturbance (fire, insects, and disease).

Under current management (Alternative A), the percentage of the Forest with high snag densities will increase over the next five decades. The percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 78 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 35 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 36 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative B Modified, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 81 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 36 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative C, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 76 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 83 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 37 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 39 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative D, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will remain steady from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 73 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and increase from 73 percent to 80 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 34 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

The large/very large size class is currently below desired conditions (historic conditions) by approximately 221,900 acres on the Forest. With unconstrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+128,011 acres), C (+127,165 acres), D (+77,382 acres), and A (+54,032 acres). With constrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+134,742 acres), D (+132,481 acres), C (+129,377 acres), and A (+110,286 acres). All of these increases will push the amount of large/very large size class acres towards the desired conditions. A lot of the middle size class becomes large/very large over the next 50 years.

What this means is that migratory birds will find an increase of stands in the large/very large size class and adequate snags under all alternatives in the next 50 years.

Birds needing openings or early-successional stands would see a decline in those conditions in the next 50 years. The KNF is currently within the desired conditions for the seedling/sapling size class. However, given current fire suppression levels and predicted vegetation treatments, there will not be enough stand-replacing fire or regeneration harvest to create enough new seedling/sapling size class over the next 50 years. Natural succession would outpace the creation of new seedling/sapling stands. Under unconstrained budgets, Alternative B Modified (-85,168 acres) will have the biggest loss of seedling/sapling size class, followed by Alternatives C (-



84,833 acres), D (-81,655 acres), and A (-75,849 acres). A loss of more than approximately 76,000 acres will push the seedling/sapling size class below HRV. Under constrained budgets, Alternative D will have the greatest loss (-91,789 acres), followed by Alternatives A (-87,475 acres), B Modified (-66,652 acres), and C (-60,030 acres). The seedling/sapling size class will move below the desired conditions over the next 50 years for some of the alternatives. If fire is allowed to play a more natural role on the landscape, then the seedling/sapling size class will likely be nearer or within the desired conditions. The revised Forest Plan provides the flexibility to use fire to keep the seedling/sapling size class within HRV.

Grazing can reduce the shrub and grass component of open forest stands. This reduces the ground fuels useful to carry the frequent fires that maintain dry forests. It also reduces the understory vegetation component that provides foraging and nesting habitat. FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will occur at sustainable levels while protecting vulnerable resources.

The above direction in the action alternatives is consistent with the agency's Landbird Strategic Plan (USDA Forest Service 2000). The action alternatives incorporated landbird management (see the direction discussed above – landbird management on the Forest also falls within the “coarse filter” approach to viability discussed in the introduction of this specialist's report). PIF priority birds and habitats were examined during the analysis for the specialist's report. Habitats for landbirds were incorporated into the desired conditions for the revised Forest Plan (again, see the “coarse filter” approach to viability in the introduction – the desired conditions for vegetation and fire are this “coarse filter”). Landbird monitoring has been incorporated as a measurement tool for the revised Forest Plan (see the landbird assemblage MIS).

**Access/Disturbance:** Alternative A will retain the existing amount of recommended wilderness and non-motorized areas. Large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in providing security and connectivity. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres motor vehicle) will have the least acreage allowing motor vehicle use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motor vehicle), A (1,677,200 acres motor vehicle), and D (1,792,900 acres motor vehicle). All alternatives have the same acreage of designated wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres).

MA5 can also contribute to security. Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

Human access can cause individuals of this group to be displaced from the vicinity of the disturbance. This effect will be more common along open roadways as that is where most of the human presence will be concentrated. Additionally, access via open roads facilitates firewood cutting, and results in a loss of snags near roadways. The loss of snags will make the areas around open roads even less desirable for some members of this group. All alternatives will improve access conditions for this assemblage through application of the Access Amendment for grizzly bears. Some roads will be closed and therefore decrease the acreage potentially affected by woodcutting and high human disturbance.

The primary impact from special use permits will likely be disturbance. However, some habitat loss or alteration may also occur. Mineral development could lead to the loss of habitat and increased human presence and therefore disturbance to members of this group in the vicinity of the activities. Individuals may be displaced to habitat elsewhere on the Forest. The footprint of a mine and mill may decrease available habitat by removing live trees and snags. The collection of forest products will result in a loss of habitat and human presence/disturbance that could displace

individuals of this group. Firewood cutting in particular will result in a loss of snag habitat along open roadways. The collection of other forest products besides firewood gathering also tends to be associated with open roads due to the ease of access. The snag loss in particular will reduce the suitability of habitat near open roadways for some species in this group. Collection of berries, plants, cones, mushrooms, and other forest products reduces the amount of these items available for foraging by migratory birds. Human presence associated with the collection of forest products could cause disturbance to individual birds and at least temporarily cause them to avoid the area.

Vegetation/fire management activities can also cause short-term disturbance, although there would be long-term habitat improvements/maintenance.

Direction in the revised Forest Plan that will decrease disturbance for various migratory birds includes: FW-DC-WL-01, FW-DC-WL-07, FW-DC-WL-10, FW-GDL-WL-02, FW-GDL-WL-19, and FW-GDL-WL-21.

Roads can also impact habitats by creating edge, increasing sediment into riparian areas, and through direct loss of habitat within the footprint of the road. FW-DC-AR-07 states that the transportation system will be environmentally compatible.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression are the most likely past activities that influenced the amount and distribution of bird habitat on NFS lands. Fire suppression in particular is likely to have changed stand structure and led to encroachment of conifers into natural openings and increased tree densities in formerly open canopied stands. Open roads likely impacted the distribution of snags due to firewood cutting. Road influences have decreased over time as access management has resulted in less routes open to motor vehicle use.

Climate change will have the potential to alter the quantity, quality, and distribution of migratory bird habitats across the Forest. Changes in temperature and precipitation patterns will likely influence vegetation and natural disturbance processes. Combined with past fire suppression and timber management, which has led to less resiliency, there could be an increased risk of large-scale disturbance impacting migratory bird habitat. Active and passive restoration, including utilizing timber harvest and fuels reduction, that trends habitats towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation will make habitats more resilient to change. This will not only restore/maintain habitats nearer to what was present under natural disturbance processes which migratory birds evolved with, but will make them more resilient and sustainable. Climate change may cause a change in timing of the life-cycle of some insects, consequently altering when prey will be available for migratory birds (page 90 in USDA 2010).

Effects in wintering areas or during migration can reduce populations of the members of this group. Wind turbines, for example, can kill individuals during migration.

### Effects Determination

The action alternatives may impact individuals or habitats for migratory birds. This determination is based in part on:

- All three action alternatives trend vegetation conditions towards desired conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-10, FW-DC-VEG-11, FW-GDL-VEG-03 through 06, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), which are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes. Vegetation conditions, under all action alternatives, will be maintained or improved for migratory birds and their habitat in the long-term, at the very least by creating a more resilient landscape;
- Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A;
- Birds needing openings or early-successional stands will see a decline in those conditions in the next 50 years. The KNF is currently within the desired conditions for the seedling/sapling size class. However, given current fire suppression levels and predicted vegetation treatments, there will not be enough stand-replacing fire or regeneration harvest to create enough new seedling/sapling size class over the next 50 years. Natural succession will outpace the creation of new seedling/sapling stands. Under unconstrained budgets, Alternative B Modified (-85,168 acres) will have the biggest loss of seedling/sapling size class, followed by Alternatives C (-84,833 acres), D (-81,655 acres), and A (-75,849 acres). A loss of more than approximately 76,000 acres will push the seedling/sapling size class below HRV. Under constrained budgets, Alternative D will have the greatest loss (-91,789 acres), followed by Alternatives A (-87,475 acres), B Modified (-66,652 acres), and C (-60,030 acres). The seedling/sapling size class will move below the desired conditions over the next 50 years for some of the Alternatives. If fire is allowed to play a more natural role on the landscape, then the seedling/sapling size class will likely be nearer or within the desired conditions. The revised Forest Plan provides the flexibility to use fire to keep the seedling/sapling size class within HRV;
- Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres);
- MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. This will be useful to maintain/restore migratory bird habitat in the long-term;

- For those species that use mature forests, old growth can contribute to available habitat (FW-STD-VEG-01 and 02, FW-GDL-VEG-01 and 02); and
- Vegetation/fire management activities can cause short-term effects (e.g., disturbance), although there will be long-term habitat improvements/maintenance.

### *Big Game*

#### **Affected Environment**

This group includes mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), moose (*Alces americanus*), elk (*Cervus canadensis nelson*), and mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*). These species are generally identified as big game or trophy species where they are hunted. Elk are analyzed in the MIS section and bighorn sheep are analyzed in the “Sensitive Species” section. Montana has a rich tradition of big game hunting, and has earned a well-deserved reputation for having some of the best big game hunting in North America. Big game has high economic and social values and is a large contributor to the quality of life in Montana.

In general, the Forest was used for the analysis area, although in some cases activities occurring on adjacent areas were also evaluated (e.g., cumulative effects). In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes). For some species, habitat is located in discreet pockets (e.g., mountain goat) and was never widespread across the Forest. In those instances, the assessment focused primarily on those areas of known use.

#### *Habitat and Life History Needs*

General habitat and life history information comes from [www.natureserve.org/explorer/index.htm](http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/index.htm) (NatureServe Explorer).

The following is a summary of the habitat used by each species.

Both species of deer browse on a variety of woody plants and graze on grasses and forbs. They move to areas with less snow in the winter (generally low elevations).

Moose generally browse on woody vegetation or aquatic vegetation. They winter in areas with forested vegetation and summer where there is vegetation for shade or water to aid in cooling.

Winter range is one of the most important components of big game habitat. The Forest provides winter range for mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat. Table 68 shows the amount of winter range, by species, on the Forest from a variety of data sources. Most data sources only give a rough approximation of the amount of winter range on the Forest due to the scale of the data.

**Table 68. Estimated Winter Range Acres on NFS lands**

Species	Winter Range (acres) on the KNF
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	672,772
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	367,465
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	354,883

Species	Winter Range (acres) on the KNF
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	989,070
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	13,690
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	284,173
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	8,407
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	10,139
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	7,917
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	5,316
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>1,353,058</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

Table 69 displays the acres within over-snow motorized use closure areas (area closures).

**Table 69. Acres Closed to Over-Snow Motor Vehicle Use (may include Winter Range and Non-winter Range)**

Area Closure	Acres on NFS Lands
Cabinet Mountains Wilderness	93,709
Other-snow Use Closure Areas	162,156
<b>Total</b>	<b>255,865</b>

Table 70 displays the acres of winter range within the area closures. These closure areas are retained in the action alternatives. There is not a large overlap among winter range and the closure areas, which is logical because most snowmobiling occurs at higher elevations that have adequate snow whereas winter range is at lower elevation with less snow. The largest overlap of the closure areas with winter range is for mountain goat, which again is logical given that mountain goats tend to winter at higher elevations than most of the other ungulates.

**Table 70. Acres of Winter Range within the Areas Closed to Over-snow Motor Vehicle Use**

Species	Winter Range on NFS Lands within Area Closures (% of Winter Range)
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	47,146 (7%)
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	32,281 (9%)
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	35,752 (10%)
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	70,666 (7%)
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	4,304 (31%)
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	32,580 (11%)
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	2,206 (26%)
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	5,951 (59%)

Species	Winter Range on NFS Lands within Area Closures (% of Winter Range)
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	3,338 (42%)
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	3,797 (71%)
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>102,110 (8%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverage's. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

Tables 71 and 72 display the snowmobile use routes and areas that occur outside of the area closures.

**Table 71. Snow Use Routes Outside of Area Closures\***

	Miles on NFS Lands
Snow Use Routes	945

\* Includes legal groomed snowmobile routes, groomed ski trails, ungroomed routes commonly used by snowmobiles, and outfitter/guide access. This includes routes within winter range and outside of winter range

**Table 72. Snow Use Areas Outside of Area Closures\***

	Acres on NFS Lands
Snow Use Areas	49,236

\* This includes legal known snowmobile play areas and ski areas and does not include illegal snowmobile use. Snow use areas include winter range and non-winter range areas

Tables 73 and 74 display the overlap between winter range, snow use routes, and snow use areas. For most species there is little overlap of snow use routes and winter range. Although many of the miles of snow use routes are within moose winter range, the overall amount of moose winter range on the Forest is so large that the effects are diluted. Also, given the large extent of moose winter range on the Forest, it is to be expected that any snow use route may overlap moose winter range. The acres of snow use areas that overlap moose winter range is very small (1%), as it is for all the other ungulate species. The impact to moose winter range will be very small if the miles of snow use routes were converted to acres (actual footprint of the routes). If the miles of snowmobile/ski trail routes were buffered to determine the "zone of influence," the impact would still be low (<10 percent of winter range impacted for these species by these routes at a forestwide scale). This assumes a very conservative estimate of effects if all the miles were buffered and the overlapping buffers were not eliminated. These conservative estimates can be arrived at by calculating the acres within the zone of influence and getting a percentage of that "zone of influence" of the total winter range for each species. For example, using a 200 meter buffer on each side for deer for ski trails (the distance recommended in Freddy et al. (1986) to prevent locomotor responses to people afoot), which are more impactful than snowmobile trails, and multiplying by the total miles of routes (regardless of whether they are ski trails or snowmobile routes), the total impact is still less than 10 percent. Even a very conservative estimate of impacts such as this, which very likely overestimates the extent of impacts, the results are low. Using a similar buffer for elk and moose also results in a low impact (<10%). If a

350 meter buffer on each side were used instead (the distance where deer showed any response at all, even if they did not move away from the activity, in Freddy et al. [1986]), the impact would still be low (<15%) for deer, elk, and moose. Using a conservative buffer of 500 meters on each side of a route for bighorn sheep (distance of bighorn sheep from “high use” routes in Papouchis et al. [2001]) also results in a low impact (<10%). This coarse-scale, forestwide look at the impacts of snow routes on big game winter range indicates a low impact forestwide.

There is very little overlap with bighorn sheep and mountain goat winter range.

**Table 73. Miles of Snow Use Routes in Winter Range**

Species	Miles of Snow Use Routes on NFS Lands w/in Winter Range
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	160
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	133
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	81
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	540
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	3
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	70
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	1
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>632</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) “Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains,” 1980

**Table 74. Acres of Snow Use Areas in Winter Range**

Species	Acres of Snow Use Areas on NFS Lands w/in Winter Range (% of winter range)
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	1,131 (<1%)
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	853 (<1%)
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	1,035 (<1%)
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	11,823 (1%)
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	314 (<1%)
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	173 (2%)
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>12,295 (1%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980.

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

### *Key Stressors Affecting Big Game*

Forest Service activities that may have direct or indirect impacts on species within this group include:

- Timber harvest which alters the quantity, quality, and placement of cover. Timber harvest, especially with prescribed fire, can increase forage quality and quantity;
- Prescribed fire by itself can also increase forage quality and quantity;
- Fire suppression can reduce the amount of forage, and alter the quantity, quality, and placement of cover;
- Access management, especially motor vehicle access, can be utilized to protect, or, when used in conjunction with hunting, to reduce populations;
- Activities that reduce the amount of security during the big game hunting season; and
- Noxious weeds can also reduce the amount of forage available for big game.

Stressors outside Forest Service control include (cumulative effects):

- The potential spread of chronic wasting disease and other diseases;
- Hunting;
- Vehicle caused mortality;
- Private development, especially in winter range, which can lead to loss of habitat, loss of connectivity, increase in vulnerability (from predators year-round, and during the hunting season);
- The spread of invasive plant species (weeds) can reduce forage values and habitat capacity;
- Severe winters can contribute to high herd mortality;
- Vegetation/fire management on non-NFS lands effect cover/forage; and
- Increased access (roads) on non-NFS lands.

These stressors can result in habitat loss, displacement, or mortality. The stressors that are outside of Forest Service control can result in population changes. Therefore, the population level of big game residing on the Forest is not completely under the control of the Forest.

### **Environmental Consequences**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Vegetation/Fire Management Effects on Cover/Forage:** Alternative A is predicted to treat approximately 14,115 acres/year (constrained budget), or 13,723 acres/year (unconstrained budget). Fire suppression is more likely to continue under Alternative A.

Fire suppression has impacted the vegetation component of habitat for big game. Many areas are outside of historic conditions and in need of active restoration and fuels reduction. If vegetation management is done to move conditions towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation and fire (FW-DC-VEG-01 through 06, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11, and FW-DC-



FIRE-03), then the vegetation component of big game habitat will be nearer to what would have been present based on natural disturbance processes. Stands will be more resilient to large-scale disturbance and less likely to be lost to fire/insects/disease. The reintroduction of fire into ecosystems can aid in restoring habitat conditions by making stand more resilient (i.e., the use of fire under the right conditions can thin stands while leaving the larger, more resilient trees, thus making the stand more resilient overall to large-scale disturbance). This will reduce the amount of stands with a dense understory. Fire suppression has artificially created cover for big game. Moving towards the desired conditions will trend the amount of cover/forage nearer to conditions that big game evolved with on the Forest, so there will still be adequate cover provided for big game. As stated in FW-DC-FIRE-03, fire plays an increased role in helping to trend vegetation towards desired conditions.

Alternative C (16,337 acre/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acre/year), D (15,618 acre/year), and A (14,115 acre/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acre/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acre/year), D (16,543 acre/year), and A (13,723 acre/year). Approximately 10,000 acre/year of prescribed burning is predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acre/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) is expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) is expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

The ERG report (ERG 2012) did not specifically analyze big game habitat; instead it analyzed a dozen other species that represent a variety of habitats on the KNF, including some that would occupy habitat that would overlap with low-elevation winter range for big game. Although big game were not specifically analyzed, this conclusion from ERG (2012) is important: "...natural disturbances (in the form of wildfire and certain insects and diseases) are projected to have effects on habitat that render the effects of management less than remarkable at the planning scale... Thus, treatments that may have considerable effects at the unit or project scale are lessened in the larger context of the total amounts of wildfire, disease, insects, and succession at the individual national forest or the KIPZ scale" (page E-4 in ERG 2012). This means that the KNF trends towards the desired conditions for vegetation and fire, but that it is natural disturbance processes that determine that overall amounts and pattern of wildlife habitats across the KNF, and active management actions such as fuels reduction and timber harvest have little impact at the Forest scale. In general, management had a positive effect on the amount and distribution of habitat for wildlife. Those desired conditions for vegetation and fire are based on historic conditions, natural disturbance processes, and changing climates. The desired conditions are similar to what wildlife, including big game, would have evolved with on the KNF, so the amount and pattern of big game habitat would be similar to what they evolved with. This includes the amount of winter range, cover, and forage on the KNF.

Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) is more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration/maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration/maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) is more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared

to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

FW-GDL-WL-10 will be applied to reduce the impacts on elk security habitat. Timber harvest can benefit security habitat if it is done to trend towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation. In doing so, the resiliency of the timbered stand component of security habitat will be improved or maintained and security habitat will be less likely to be lost to a large-scale disturbance (e.g., fire, insects, and disease). Although FW-GDL-10 specifically mentions elk, these security areas will benefit other species as well, including other big game.

Concentrations of livestock can influence big game habitat use. Elk will avoid areas of high livestock use (PNRS 2006), so livestock presence can affect elk use of security areas. Livestock graze on a small proportion of the Forest, so there are many areas free from cattle. Depending on the intensity of grazing, the use of fire can be affected due to the loss of fine ground fuels to carry a fire. Human presence associated with livestock management can also cause disturbance to big game and cause them to avoid those areas. FW-DC-GRZ-01 states that grazing will occur at sustainable levels while protecting resources, so this could aid in reducing impacts from livestock where they are found to be a concern.

Noxious weeds are limited or reduced through FW-DC-VEG-10, FW-OBJ-VEG-02, GA-DC-VEG-FSH-01, GA-DC-WL-FSH-03, GA-DC-VEG-KOO-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-04, GA-DC-VEG-LIB-03, and GA-DC-VEG-TOB-02. This improves forage conditions across the Forest.

**Access:** Both motorized and non-motorized access can result in disturbance to big game (Ciuti et al. 2012, Canfield et al. 1999, Schultz and Bailey 1978, Freddy et al. 1986, Ward and Cupal 1979). As road densities increase, elk habitat effectiveness decreases (Lyon 1984). In some cases ungulates may react more to a person on foot than a motorized vehicle (Eckstein et al. 1979, Richens and Lavigne 1978, Lavigne 1976). White et al. (2005) found that some animals in Yellowstone can habituate to over-snow motorized use and display little or no reaction unless they are approached on foot. This report by White et al. (2005) suggested that active responses by wildlife can be diminished by restricting over-snow motorized travel to predictable routes and times, reducing the number of vehicles in a group, and other means.

The response of other big game, such as white-tailed deer, to snowmobiling has been studied as well (Dorrance et al. 1975). Depending on where the activity occurs, such as in an area where hunting is allowed versus where it is not, white-tailed deer may habituate to snowmobile use. In areas where hunting is allowed, the deer reacted more to snowmobiles and may not as easily habituate to human (snowmobile) presence (Dorrance et al. 1975).

Some research on the effects of recreation on big game has been conducted at the Starkey Experimental Forest in Oregon. Wisdom et al. (2005) found that off-road activities such as ATV use, hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding appear to have a “substantial effect on elk behavior” (page 6 in Wisdom et al. 2005). It should be noted that their “off-road” transects included the use of primitive road beds (page 2 in Wisdom et al. 2005). The study did not include an estimate of the energetic costs of the behavioral effects to elk, so it is unclear what the overall effects were to the individual animal or herd health. However, the study does show that the activities studied can impact elk use of habitat due to disturbance/displacement away from the human activities. The reactions of mule deer during the study were not as clear. Deer didn’t appear to move as much in response to the activities, but they may have been responding by making small behavioral changes such as using dense cover. Naylor et al. (2009) reported similar results for elk from this study on the Starkey Experimental Forest.

Ciuti et al. (2012) is representative of the impacts of recreation on big game on NFS lands. In Ciuti et al. (2012) they found that the “highest levels of vigilance were recorded on public lands where hunting and motorized recreation activities were cumulative compared to the national park during summer, which had the lowest levels of vigilance.” Big game is hunted on the KNF, so the findings in Ciuti et al. (2012) are relevant. Ciuti et al. (2012) found that elk decreased their feeding time when closer to roads and became more vigilant as traffic volume increased.

The KNF acknowledges that all types of recreation, whether motorized or non-motorized, can have disturbance impacts on wildlife, including big game. However, most non-motorized users arrive on the KNF and navigate to their chosen non-motorized recreation spot by driving a motorized vehicle on the KNF’s road system. Additionally, the number of non-motorized users diminishes with increasing distance from a road. Thus, road access influences the distribution of non-motorized use on the KNF.

The action alternatives includes direction to minimize disturbance to big game from management activities, with the definition of management activity in the revised Forest Plan being “[a]ny activity that is carried out or authorized by the Forest that would result in impacts on natural resources or change human use of the Forest.” Access management, both motorized and non-motorized, would classify as a management activity because it would have an impact on natural resources (e.g., big game) and change human use on the Forest (the distribution of motorized or non-motorized recreation). Therefore, the revised Forest Plan does include and acknowledge that non-motorized uses may have an impact on wildlife, including big game. Examples of applicable direction in the revised Forest Plan include FW-GDL-WL-08, FW-GDL-WL-09, and FW-GDL-WL-11 which limit disturbance to big game on winter range and during birthing/parturition.

Although FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02 specifically mention elk, elk security areas also provide security habitat for other wildlife species, including other big game. Therefore, other big game will benefit from the direction provided in FW-GDL-WL-10 and FW-OBJ-WL-02.

Alternative A will retain the existing amount of recommended wilderness and non-motorized areas. Large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in providing security, areas with low levels of disturbance, and connectivity of big game populations. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres motorized, 1,812,700 acres over-snow motorized) will have the least acreage allowing motorized use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motorized, 1,918,400 acres over-snow motorized), A (1,677,200 acres motorized, 1,961,100 acres over-snow motorized), and D (1,792,900 acres motorized, 1,987,700 acres over-snow motorized). These acreages reflect what will remain open to over-snow vehicle use based on closure order issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan. The desired conditions for over-snow vehicle use will have that use allowed on 1,500,700 acres under Alternative C, followed by 1,713,000 acres under Alternative B Modified, and 1,859,100 acres under Alternative D. These are the acres where the MA desired conditions allows over-snow vehicle use. These acres reflect the intent for future closures, following site-specific winter travel management. In addition to the differences in MA allocations among the alternatives, the existing area closures on the Forest would be retained under all alternatives. Some of these snowmobile closure areas overlap winter range. All alternatives have the same acreage of wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres). MA1a does not allow over-snow motorized use.

The grizzly bear Access Amendment is incorporated into all alternatives. The effects will therefore be the same for all alternatives. Implementation will improve security habitat for not only grizzly bears, but for big game as well. FW-DC-AR-06, although directed at providing people solitude and non-motorized experiences in remote settings, will maintain or create areas that may function as security habitat for big game. FW-DC-WL-02 states that a forestwide system of large remote areas will be maintained or created, and these areas could function as security habitat for big game as well. Although people may still recreate in non-motorized areas, the likelihood of disturbance to big game will be lower and therefore security will be greater.

Special use permits/lands can affect the amount and quality of big game security habitat. Anything that changes motorized route locations or densities can change security habitat. Special use permits that do not change motorized routes can still affect security by increasing human presence within security areas and thereby changing the quality of those habitats.

Mineral activities can reduce the amount of big game security habitat. The footprint of the mine/mill can remove security habitat, as can the haul/supply route. Not only can the footprint of these facilities remove habitat, but the increased disturbance can affect nearby habitat.

The collection of forest products primarily occurs near open roads. Any collection that occurs away from open motorized routes may cause disturbance to big game in security habitat. However, the effects are expected to be minor because most collecting occurs near open roads.

FW-GDL-WL-10 will minimize disturbance, along with FW-GDL-WL-08, 09, and 11.

Most snowmobiling occurs at higher elevations, which places it above most of the big game winter range on the Forest. The direction in the revised Forest Plan, including area closures for over-snow motorized use, will reduce the impacts on winter range over that of the existing 1987 Forest Plan, which already minimized the effects to big game winter range. The acres available to over-snow motorized use diminishes in Alternative B Modified and Alternative C, over that of Alternative A. Livestock do not occur over much of the KNF, but their impacts would be minimized through FW-DC-GRZ-01.

**Table 75. Acres Closed to Over-Snow Motor Vehicle Use by Alternative**

Alternative	Forest Service Acres
A	258,000
B Modified	298,600
C	404,300
D	230,600

As shown Table 75, the acres of area closures where over-snow motor vehicle use is not allowed varies by alternative. The changes are mainly due to the acres in recommended wilderness. As expected, Alternative C has the most acres of area closures as it has the most acres of recommended wilderness.

The amount of snow use routes and snow use areas outside of area closures are shown in tables 76 and 77, respectively. Again, Alternative C has the least miles of snow use routes and acres of snow use areas due to an increase in recommended wilderness.

**Table 76. Miles of Snow Use Routes Outside of Area Closures**

Alternative	Forest Service Miles
A	945
B Modified	937
C	918
D	945

**Table 77. Acres of Snow Use Areas Outside of Area Closures**

Alternative	Forest Service Acres
A	49,236
B Modified	49,187
C	39,263
D	49,233

Tables 78 through 80 display the acres of winter range within area closures by alternative.

**Table 78. Acres of Winter Range within the Areas Closed to Over-snow Motor Vehicle Use for Alternative B Modified**

Species	Winter Range on NFS Lands within Area Closures (% of winter range)
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	59,022 (9%)
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	34,844 (9%)
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	40,681 (12%)
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	83,821 (8%)
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	4,304 (31%)
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	33,190 (12%)
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	2,561 (30%)
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	4,593 (45%)
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	2,732 (35%)
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	4,019 (76%)
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>117,622 (9%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

**Table 79. Acres of Winter Range within the Areas Closed to Over-snow Motor Vehicle Use for Alternative C**

Species	Winter Range on NFS Lands within Area Closures (% of winter range)
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	63,283 (9%)
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	36,681 (10%)
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	48,650 (14%)
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	125,811 (13%)
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	4,938 (36%)
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	33,852 (12%)
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	2,561 (30%)
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	7,294 (72%)
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	3,081 (39%)
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	4,274 (80%)
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>166,889 (12%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

**Table 80. Acres of Winter Range within the Areas Closed to Over-snow Motor Vehicle Use for Alternative D**

Species	Winter Range on NFS Lands within Area Closures (% of winter range)
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	45,792 (7%)
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	33,582 (9%)
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	36,356 (11%)
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	72,077 (7%)
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	4,304 (3%)
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	32,551 (11%)
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	2,206 (26%)
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	5,198 (51%)
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	1,756 (22%)
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	3,094 (58%)
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>99,240 (7%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

Tables 81 through 83 display the overlap of snow use routes with winter range by action alternative.

**Table 81. Miles of Snow Use Routes in Winter Range for Alternative B Modified**

Species	Miles of Snow Use Routes on NFS Lands w/in Winter Range
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	160
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	133
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	81
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	540
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	3
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	70
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	1
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>632</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

**Table 82. Miles of Snow Use Routes within Winter Range for Alternative C**

Species	Miles of Snow Use Routes on NFS Lands w/in Winter Range
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	160
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	133
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	81
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	535
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	3
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	70
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	1
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>628</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

**Table 83. Miles of Snow Use Routes within Winter Range for Alternative D**

Species	Miles of Snow Use Routes on NFS Lands w/in Winter Range
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	161
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	133
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	81
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	539
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	3
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	70
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	1
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	0
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>632</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

Tables 84 through 86 display the overlap of snow use areas with winter range by action alternative.

**Table 84. Acres of Snow Use Areas within Winter Range for Alternative B Modified**

Species	Acres of Snow Use Areas on NFS Lands w/in Winter Range (% of winter range)
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	1,131 (<1%)
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	853 (<1%)
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	1,035 (<1%)
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	11,823 (1%)
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	314 (<1%)
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	173 (2%)
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>12,295 (1%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range



**Table 85. Acres of Snow Use Areas within Winter Range for Alternative C**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Acres of Snow Use Areas on NFS Lands w/in Winter Range (% of winter range)</b>
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	1,114 (<1%)
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	853 (<1%)
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	1,023 (<1%)
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	11,819 (1%)
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	314 (<1%)
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	173 (2%)
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>12,268 (1%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

**Table 86. Acres of Snow Use Areas within Winter Range for Alternative D**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Acres of Snow Use Areas on NFS Lands w/in Winter Range (% of winter range)</b>
KIPZ General Winter Range (elk/deer) <sup>1</sup>	1,131 (<1%)
Elk (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	853 (<1%)
Mule Deer (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	1,035 (<1%)
Moose (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	11,823 (1%)
Bighorn Sheep (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)
Whitetail Deer (winter) <sup>2</sup>	314 (<1%)
Mountain Goat (general/winter) <sup>2</sup>	0 (0%)
Mountain Goat (likely winter) <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)
Mountain Goat (possible winter) <sup>3</sup>	173 (2%)
Mountain Goat (winter) <sup>3</sup>	0 (0%)
<b>Total Acres (where at least one species uses it as winter range)<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>12,295 (1%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Potential winter range for the KIPZ revision zone based on 1987 Forest Plan MAs, vegetation response units, habitat groups, and ownership, 2004, 1:24000

<sup>2</sup> MTFWP winter range coverages. Shows general/winter range (winter range can be used during other seasons as well and are not solely used as winter range), 1:100,000

<sup>3</sup> From Gayle Joslin's (MTFWP) "Mountain Goat Habitat Management Plan for the Cabinet Mountains," 1980

<sup>4</sup> This total is not a cumulative total of all the individual acreages in each column because there is overlap among the species' winter ranges. This is the total of acres where at least one species may use it as winter range

There is very little difference among the alternatives regarding impacts to winter range from snow use areas and routes. All the action alternatives are very similar to the existing condition. As discussed above in the existing condition section, the impacts from the existing snow use routes and areas on winter range is very small. Therefore, because the action alternatives have very similar effects as the existing condition, there will be very little impact to winter range under any of the alternatives. Given the direction in the action alternatives to minimize impacts on winter range coupled with the already very small impact on winter range, it is clear that the revised Forest Plan is more than adequate to protect winter range. This coarse-scale forestwide look at the impacts revealed that the effects are small at this level of analysis. The direction in the revised Forest Plan to minimize effects to winter range where an overlap with over-snow use does occur provides added assurance that effects can be kept minimal at all scales within the Forest.

### *Cumulative Effects*

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past management on NFS lands, particularly access management, likely impacted the amount and location of security habitat on the Forest. Access management has trended towards reducing the amount of motorized routes on the Forest over time. Timber management, fuels reduction, and fire suppression have impacted the amounts and pattern of forage/cover for native ungulates on the Forest. Fire suppression in particular likely had the greatest influence. It likely led to the encroachment of conifers into natural openings and limited the creation of new openings that would provide foraging habitat.

Timber harvest and fuels reduction occurring on private, state, or Canadian lands may impact the distribution, amount, and quality of big game habitat and may impact connectivity between NFS lands. Activities on other land ownerships may degrade or improve ungulate habitat, particularly winter range on private lands. If timber harvest and fuels reduction are done to move conditions nearer to those present under natural disturbance processes, then ungulate habitat will be maintained or improved. However, if conditions are not maintained or restored to those found under natural disturbance processes, winter range can be degraded. Subdivision of winter range on private lands can lead to loss of winter range for native ungulates. Fuels reduction near these homes has the potential to degrade winter range, as discussed above. The desired conditions for vegetation in the revised Forest Plan will maintain or improve not only security habitat on the Forest, but also cover/forage for native ungulates. Vegetation management that trend towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation on the Forest will move conditions nearer to what would have been present under natural disturbance processes. Therefore the amount and pattern of ungulate habitat, including winter range, on the Forest will be similar to conditions that ungulates evolved with under natural disturbance processes.

Climate change may have an impact on vegetation and therefore the timber stand component of security habitat as well as forage/cover. Past fire suppression has increased stand densities and decreased the resiliency of some stands to large-scale disturbance (fire, insects, and disease). Climate change may increase the likelihood of large-scale disturbance. However, moving stand conditions towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation will decrease stand densities and increase their resiliency to large-scale disturbance. Habitat conditions will be nearer to what will be present under natural disturbance processes, which includes the pattern and amount of forage/cover for big game. The vegetation component of habitat for big game will be nearer to what was present historically, and will be more resilient to large-scale disturbance and the impacts of climate change. Climate change may alter big game use of winter range, as well as change the timing of movements between seasonal ranges (page 92 in USDA 2010).

Any construction of roads on other land ownerships, as well as subdivision and development, may decrease security habitat not only on those lands, but also on the immediately adjacent NFS lands.

Private land development and increased road densities or increased use of existing roads can impact connectivity. Vehicle-ungulate collisions can cause direct mortality to big game as well.

Hunting, managed by the state, can impact big game populations. Depending on the management goals, hunting regulations can lead to decreasing, increasing, or stable populations. Diseases, such as chronic wasting disease, can also impact big game populations and cause a decline. Severe weather can impact herds and cause a decline.

### Effects Determination

Each of the action alternatives **may impact** big game and their habitat. This determination is based in part on:

- Based on FW-GDL-WL-10, security habitat for elk will be maintained or increased. These areas not only provide security for elk, but also for other wildlife species such as big game;
- Wilderness areas (MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01), IRAs, and other non-motorized areas (FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, FW-GDL-WL-10, MA3-DC-WL-01, and MA5abc-DC-WL-01) contribute to secure habitat and connectivity for big game;
- Additional direction within the revised Forest Plan that contributes to habitat for big game includes: GA-DC-WL-CLK-01 and 02; GA-DC-WL-FSH-02 and 03; GA-DC-WL-KOO-01, 03, and 04; GA-DC-WL-LIB-02 and 03; and GA-DC-WL-TOB-01. These either specifically mention maintaining security habitat for big game within specific GAs, or would decrease disturbance or maintain the vegetation components of big game habitat;
- During the winter period, FW-GDL-WL-08 and 09 are designed to minimize or avoid disturbance to big game on winter ranges, and FW-GDL-WL-11 reduces disturbance on calving areas. The impact on winter range will be lessened under Alternatives B Modified and C compared to the existing conditions. The existing 1987 Forest Plan already had direction that protected winter range, and the revised Forest Plan would diminish the areas available to over-snow motor vehicle use even more; and
- Habitat for native ungulates will be managed in coordination with state agencies, with cover/forage managed based on the desired conditions for vegetation in the revised Forest Plan (FW-DC-WL-16). The desired conditions are based on natural disturbance processes, and big game will have the amounts and pattern of habitat similar to the conditions they evolved with on the Forest as conditions trend towards the desired conditions.

## Connectivity

### Affected Environment

Connectivity was evaluated as several scales. First, the effects of the action alternatives on connectivity *within* blocks of NFS lands were evaluated. Secondly, the effects of the action alternatives on connectivity *between* blocks of NFS lands were evaluated. Thirdly, the cumulative effects analysis evaluated the intermixture of effects of the action alternatives and activities on adjacent lands on connectivity. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Connectivity is the arrangements of habitats that allow organisms and ecological processes to move across the landscape. Connectivity benefits wildlife populations by allowing genetic interchange, allowing individuals to find new territories, allowing populations to expand into currently unoccupied habitat, counteracting habitat fragmentation/isolation, allowing species to respond to climate change, and reducing mortality (e.g., reduced roadkill) (Crooks and Sanjayan 2006, Hilty et al. 2006, Morrison et al. 2002).

The KNF is contiguous with the Idaho Panhandle National Forests to the west, Canada to the north, the Flathead NF to the east, and the Lolo NF to the south. Wildlife and natural ecosystem processes occur irrespective of political boundaries. On the KNF, connectivity of vegetation has been influenced to varying degrees by road construction, ski area development, timber harvest, fire, utility corridors, and land ownership. Construction of primary roads (maintenance level 3 through 5) and highways (200, 2, 56, and 37) has reduced connectivity of patches to some degree. In addition, roads may also serve as dispersal routes for some wildlife and plant species.

There is one small ski area on the KNF (Turner Mountain) with no likely addition of other ski areas. This ski area has had minimal impacts on connectivity or patch size due to its small size.

Utility corridors can impact connectivity and increase the amount of edge created. There are eleven existing electric transmission lines on the KNF. All of the lines, except for one, are a part of the northwest power transmission grid and are interconnected. All of the lines are of two sizes, 115kv and 230kv.

Railroads also can create barriers to wildlife movement, such as the railroad that parallels the Kootenai River.

Land ownership and the associated management of it can also have an effect on connectivity. Land managed to differing intents can create more edge or affect patch size. Private development, especially in winter range, can lead to a loss of connectivity.

Changes to connectivity have largely been associated with roads. Just prior to the time the existing Forest Plan was approved in September, 1987, about 27 percent of the NFS roads had either yearlong or seasonal prohibitions in effect (table 87) (1987 Forest Plan FEIS, page IV-51). The Plan projected that in order to provide the issue resolution desired, about 57 percent of the roads would eventually need some form of prohibition. This would be about double the miles of road with prohibitions at the time the revised Forest Plan was approved. The assumption was that the number of new roads needed to harvest timber would increase significantly, and that they would all have prohibitions in effect when the timber sales were completed - the net result being an increase in the number of miles of road with prohibitions but the number of miles of roads without prohibitions would remain the same. The need for additional prohibitions was to protect

dispersed recreation values, provide for wildlife security in big game winter and summer range, reduce road maintenance costs, and provide for grizzly bear recovery. Because of the significant increase in the amount of miles of road under prohibitions needed (from 27 percent to 57 percent), it was assumed that it would take about 10 years to accomplish. This is about an 11 percent increase each year to reach the planned level.

By 1997, the objective of having prohibitions on approximately 57 percent of the Forest's roads (Forest Plan page II-10) was achieved. By 2002, the percentage of existing roads with either yearlong or seasonal prohibitions reached 63 percent. In 2004, the percentage stabilized at 63 percent and continued to be stable through 2007. It has increased to 65 percent in 2009. Table 87 shows the progression. The roads with prohibitions are both yearlong and seasonal prohibitions. The percentage of roads with prohibitions is 8 percent greater than estimated, and the total amount roads without prohibitions are 1,699 miles less than was estimated in the 1987 Forest Plan. This is partly a result of the fact that new road construction was less than anticipated due to reductions in the timber sale program. Prohibitions have been placed on roads that previously had no prohibitions (which were not anticipated to have prohibitions in the Forest Plan) and on newly constructed roads. The reasons for these unanticipated prohibitions include additional wildlife habitat security measures, to decrease potential sedimentation, and to improve hydrological conditions.

The trend over the last five years is that the number of roads where motor vehicle use is prohibited, either yearlong or seasonally, has risen slightly (approximately 86 miles).

**Table 87. Forest Roads Access Restrictions**

<b>FY</b>	<b>Total Miles of Road</b>	<b>Total Miles of Road with Prohibitions</b>	<b>% of Total Roads with Prohibitions</b>	<b>Total Miles of Road without Prohibitions</b>	<b>Difference in Miles of Road without Prohibitions since FY87</b>
87	6,200	1,669	27%	4,530	0
92	7,149	3,784	53%	3,365	(1,165)
97	7,460	4,275	57%	3,185	(1,345)
02	7,954	4,982	63%	2,934	(1,596)
04	7,916	4,971	63%	2,945	(1,585)
06	7,908	4,968	63%	2,940	(1,590)
07	7,888	4,983	63%	2,905	(1,645)
08	7,886	5,030	64%	2,856	(1,674)
09	7,888	5,057	65	2,831	(1,699)

\* National Forest System roads only, where motor vehicle use is prohibited either yearlong or seasonally

The 1987 Forest Plan contained direction for connectivity, generally in terms of providing travel corridors for big game. In many cases, these travel corridors were simply timbered stands, approximately 150-300 feet wide, which occurred between regeneration harvest units. The importance of connectivity has been addressed in recovery plans (grizzly bear [1993]), the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines [1986], various biological opinions, and the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (2007).

Several analyses (Servheen et al. 2003, American Wildlands 2008, Ruediger and Lloyd 2003, Mattson and Merrill 2004) have been conducted by various entities, including federal and private, to address connectivity. The Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group produced a report in 2010 examining connectivity in Washington, as well as part of Idaho and Montana (WWHCWG 2010). This includes connectivity between the IPNF, KNF, and the Colville NF in Washington. The Forest reviewed the various analyses that have been completed and conducted an analysis of forest conditions in relation to providing for wildlife movement within and across the Forest. Management areas such as wilderness and others (recommended wilderness, wilderness study area, inventoried roadless areas) that allow for limited motorized route densities and have low levels of development are considered to provide higher quality habitats for such use.

Backcountry or semi-primitive motorized/non-motorized (MAs 2 and 3 in the existing Forest Plan) areas are generally without roads and are in unsuitable timberlands. These areas vary in size (300 to 22,000 acres) and management activities are generally less intensive, less frequent, and less visible than management activities in other MAs. Few improvements, with the exceptions of trails, are provided. Higher levels of wildlife security are provided and water quality and aquatic health are normally good to excellent within these areas. See table 88.

**Table 88. Acres (1987 Plan as amended) of Management Areas 2, 3, 7, 8, and 9**

Management Area	Description	Existing Acres
2	Semi-primitive Non-motorized	302,800
3	Semi-primitive Motorized	13,400
7	Existing Wilderness	93,500
8	Recommended Wilderness	102,500*
9	Montana Wilderness Study Area	34,100*

\* 26,000 acres overlap in both MA8 and 9. These 26,000 acres are both within the Wilderness Study Area and are Recommended Wilderness

Inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) on the KNF account for 28 percent of the land base. 257,000 acres (or 11 percent of NFS lands) of the IRAs currently allow for road construction and road reconstruction and 265,000 acres do not allow for road construction/road reconstruction (1 percent of land base). There are 117,000 acres currently in recommended wilderness. IRAs contribute to connectivity and provide security habitat for species.

The AMS documented how traditional timber harvest strategies had substantially changed the Forest from historical conditions. The range of patch sizes was significantly smaller following harvest activities and post-harvest conditions were often similar. While prescribed fire has the potential to approximate certain natural ecological conditions and processes, it is often applied on a much smaller scale and with less variability in severity than fires.

There has been a significant reduction in the overall number of fires compared to historical conditions, although in recent decades the acres contained in large fires has increased and become more variable. Low and mixed-severity wild fires have essentially been eliminated as a significant disturbance process. Most high-severity fires have also been successfully suppressed. It has been recognized, however, that the overall suppression of unplanned ignitions has increased fire risk in certain forest types, producing unusually severe effects, particularly in drier forests. The suppression of fires has contributed to the overall effect of changes in landscape

pattern (more homogeneity across the landscape), and changes in species composition (i.e., increases in species that are shade tolerant, fire and drought intolerant, and trees that are more susceptible to insects and disease).

Interrelated with the suppression of fires, was the associated change in insect and disease activities that have occurred. Insects and diseases are now the dominant disturbance process on the KNF. Particularly susceptible are those trees that have benefited from fire exclusion – shade tolerant/drought and fire intolerant species. Certain insects/diseases that historically thinned the forest at regular intervals now occur as stand replacing disturbances (e.g., root diseases and Douglas-fir bark beetles). Furthermore, white pine blister rust has substantially reduced the amount and changed the age-class structure of five needle pines (i.e., western white pine and whitebark pine) throughout the Forest.

Connectivity can take several forms, from linear corridors, to stepping stones of suitable habitat, to managing the landscape as a whole so that movement is facilitated without the need for a "corridor." Connectivity is species specific, and what is considered homogenous habitat for a wide-ranging carnivore can be heterogeneous for a small mammal (pages 164-166 in Morrison 2002).

High-volume roads can create a barrier that degrades habitat connectivity. These roads can cause mortality, prevent movement, change habitat near the roadway, and alter animal behavior (pages 505-506 in Clevenger and Wierzchowski 2006). Forman et al. (2003) states that roads can be barriers to movement for a species and can "...result in higher mortality, lower reproduction and, ultimately, smaller populations and lower population viability" (page 129 in Forman et al. 2003).

Low traffic volume roads in remote areas, such as many roads on NFS lands generally have lesser effects than high-volume roads. Forman et al. (2003) states, "The effects of vehicles in remote areas are somewhat limited because of the low road density and sparse traffic. Wildlife may be habituated to the possible disturbance caused by passing vehicles. The roads are permeable for crossing by most animals and thus have little effect on movement patterns except in locations where human development and road density are relatively great. Wildlife collisions with vehicles are usually not a problem, in part due to low vehicle speeds. Noteworthy exceptions are where animals such as reptiles are attracted to the road surface, particularly at night" (page 355 in Forman et al. 2003).

As described in Hilty et al. 2006, "Connectivity is determined 1) by the distances between patches relative to an organism's ability to travel, 2) by the quality of the patches themselves, 3) by the hospitality of the matrix that must be traversed, and 4) by the presence of corridors or paths of less resistance for these movements" (page 146 in Hilty et al. 2006).

### *Key Stressors*

Impacts to connectivity include those that affect the distribution, pattern, quality, and quantity of habitat, as well as the human presence/disturbance influence on an animal's ability to move through and use that habitat.

Stressors that are under Forest Service control include:

- Vegetation/Fire management (timber harvest, fuels reduction, fire suppression, noxious weeds, grazing, etc.); and
- Access/Disturbance.

Stressors that are outside of Forest Service control includes:

- Vegetation/Fire management on non-Forest Service ownerships;
- Access/Disturbance on non-Forest Service ownerships;
- Private land development; and
- Climate Change.

### **Environmental Consequences**

#### *Effects Related to Key Stressors under Forest Service Control*

**Vegetation/Fire Management:** Alternative A is most likely to result in the continued suppression of most fires.

Attaining the desired conditions for vegetation will have a large impact on connectivity. As discussed above, native species will have similar amounts of connectivity habitats as found historically under natural processes if the desired conditions for vegetation are achieved. This is based on the assumption that native species evolved with the natural processes; and therefore, if habitats are restored/maintained near historical conditions and natural processes are allowed to function with less restriction, then wildlife has the amounts and arrangement of habitats more closely approximating what they had historically.

The more fire is allowed to play a more natural role; the closer the amount and distribution of habitats will be to what would have been present historically. Fuels reduction can also aid in restoring habitat (connectivity) for native species when it is compatible with the desired conditions for vegetation. In close proximity to homes, if fuels reduction is not done to meet the desired conditions for vegetation, then connectivity can be degraded for some species. Allowing fire to play a more natural role in these ecosystems through implementation of FW-DC-FIRE-03 will be useful for maintaining and restoring the vegetation component of connectivity that native species evolved with in these ecosystems.

Timber management can have a large impact on the amount and arrangement of connectivity available for species. Where timber management will be used as a tool to achieve the desired conditions for vegetation, then connectivity can be moved towards the arrangement and amounts that would have been present historically under natural disturbance processes.

All three action alternatives trend vegetation conditions towards desired conditions (FW-DC-VEG-01 through FW-DC-VEG-08, FW-DC-VEG-10 and 11, FW-STD-VEG-01 and 02, FW-GDL-VEG-01 through 06, and FW-DC-FIRE-03), which are based on historic conditions and natural disturbance processes. The difference between the alternatives is primarily how much vegetation treatment will be predicted each year to trend conditions toward the desired conditions for vegetation. Alternative C (16,337 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives B Modified (15,815 acres/year), D (15,618 acres/year), and A (14,115 acres/year) under constrained budgets. With an unconstrained budget, Alternative B Modified (19,480 acres/year) will have the most active restoration followed by Alternatives C (19,129 acres/year), D (16,543 acres/year), and A (13,723 acres/year). Approximately 10,000 acres/year of prescribed burning will be predicted under the action alternatives, with 8,000 acres/year of prescribed burning in Alternative A. Of the alternatives, C (2,345 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under constrained budgets in the first decade, followed by B Modified (1,828 acres), D (1,627 acres) and then A (1,615 acres). Of the alternatives, D (6,543 acres) will be expected to have more regeneration treatments per year under unconstrained



budgets in the first decade, followed by A (5,644 acres), B Modified (4,980 acres) and then C (4,649 acres).

Given the predicted amounts of harvest, active restoration will have little impact on habitat pattern at the Forest scale compared to the potential impacts of fire use. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) will have a much greater likelihood of maintaining or improving habitat pattern across the Forest. Alternative A (current Forest Plan as implemented) is more likely to result in continued suppression of most fires and therefore less passive restoration or maintenance of habitat pattern. The action alternatives have more flexibility to use fire for habitat restoration or maintenance. The use of natural, unplanned ignitions (passive restoration) is more likely in MA1, and Alternative C (342,600 acres) will have the most MA1, followed by B Modified (230,500 acres), A (204,300 acres equivalent to MA1), and D (163,900 acres). Fire may also be used more in MA5 compared to MA6, and Alternatives C (477,900 acres) and B Modified (487,400 acres) have more than D (278,000 acres).

MA direction in the revised Forest Plan that supports expanded use of natural, unplanned ignitions and planned ignitions includes: MA1a-DC-VEG-01, MA1a-DC-FIRE-01, MA1a-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1b-DC-VEG-01, MA1b-DC-FIRE-01, MA1b-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA1c-DC-VEG-01, MA1c-DC-FIRE-01, MA1c-GDL-FIRE-01 and 02, MA2-DC-FIRE-01, MA2-DC-VEG-01, MA2-GDL-FIRE-01 through 03, MA5abc-DC-VEG-01, MA5abc-DC-FIRE-01, and MA5abc-GDL-FIRE-01. This will be useful to maintain or restore connectivity in the long-term.

Further direction in the action alternatives that will contribute to providing habitat for a variety of species and contributing to connectivity, including species that may use snags, downed wood, burned habitat, old growth, and riparian/aquatic habitats, includes: FW-DC-TBR-01, FW-DC-TBR-03, FW-STD-TBR-08, FW-GDL-TBR-01, FW-DC-GRZ-01, and most of the direction in the “Watershed, Soil, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources” section.

Under current management (Alternative A), the percentage of the Forest with high snag densities will increase over the next five decades. The percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acre in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 78 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acre in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 35 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 36 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative B Modified, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acre in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 75 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 81 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acre in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 36 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative C, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acre in the 10"-20" dbh range will increase from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 76 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 73 percent to 83 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acre in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 12 percent in decade 1 to 37 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 12 percent to 39 percent with constrained budgets.

For Alternative D, the percentage of the Forest with 10+ snags/acres in the 10"-20" dbh range will remain steady from approximately 73 percent in decade 1 to 73 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and increase from 73 percent to 80 percent with constrained budgets. The percentage of the Forest with 4+ snags/acres in the >20" dbh range will increase from approximately 11 percent in decade 1 to 34 percent in decade 5 with an unconstrained budget and 11 percent to 37 percent with constrained budgets.

The large/very large size class is currently below desired conditions (historic conditions) by approximately 221,900 acres on the Forest. With unconstrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+128,011 acres), C (+127,165 acres), D (+77,382 acres), and A (+54,032 acres). With constrained budgets, there will be an increase in acres in this size class in the next 50 years for Alternatives B Modified (+134,742 acres), D (+132,481 acres), C (+129,377 acres), and A (+110,286 acres). All of these increases will push the amount of large/very large size class acres towards the desired conditions. A lot of the middle size class becomes large/very large over the next 50 years.

The GA direction is suited for the dynamic habitats found on the KNF and is compatible with the desired conditions for vegetation and fire found in the action alternatives. As the example using marten and flammulated owl habitat in the ERG report (ERG 2012) shows, the action alternatives will provide connectivity within and through the KNF and is better than having static, inflexible, mapped polygons that are incompatible with the KNF's dynamic natural disturbance processes. Additionally, because there are currently no crossing structures existing or planned across highways that cut through the KNF, nor are there any multi-agency/landowner agreements to manage connectivity within or adjacent to the KNF's boundary, the flexible nature of the GA and forestwide direction allows the KNF to manage connectivity in the future if multi-agency/landowner efforts result in the development of such structures or agreements to manage connectivity.

The flexible connectivity direction found in the GA and forestwide sections of the revised Forest Plan is more compatible with the dynamic habitats and natural disturbance processes on the KNF than static, inflexible, permanent mapped polygons. What exists today for connectivity may change in the future due to natural disturbance processes. Connectivity, like habitat components, is species specific. There may be some commonalities among a group of species, but there are also some incompatibilities. Connectivity for wet forest species is different than connectivity for dry forest species. A map for mature, wet-forest habitat connectivity will only be a snap-shot in time. If a fire altered habitat over a large-scale, then that map may be obsolete. Therefore, the action alternatives did not use static, inflexible, permanent, and snap-shot in time mapped polygons to manage connectivity. It used the flexible connectivity direction in the GA and forestwide sections to provide connectivity for species on the KNF. The KNF's concept for connectivity is similar to the KNF's concept for the desired conditions for vegetation and fire. The habitats, and connectivity, on the KNF are dynamic and reflective of natural disturbance processes. Managing for the desired conditions for vegetation and fire in the revised Forest Plan, combined with the connectivity direction in the GA and forestwide sections of the action alternatives, will provide the habitats and connectivity similar to the conditions species on the KNF evolved with under natural disturbance processes.

Grazing can impact connectivity through alteration of vegetation communities, although this impact will be small on the KNF because of the limited grazing opportunities. Grazing can reduce the amount of forage available for native wildlife, the presence of livestock can cause

wildlife to avoid the area, and the presence of grazing permittees or their employees can cause disturbance to wildlife.

**Access/disturbance:** Access will be one of the biggest impacts on connectivity, in particular for those species that are sensitive to human disturbance. The Access Amendment for grizzly bears, which applies to all alternatives, reduced road densities and will over time improve conditions for a variety of species.

Alternative A will retain the existing amount of recommended wilderness and non-motorized areas. Large areas with limitations on motorized use can aid in connectivity of wildlife populations. Alternative C (1,490,400 acres motorized, 1,812,700 acres over-snow motorized) will have the least acreage allowing motorized use, followed by Alternatives B Modified (1,637,300 acres motorized, 1,918,400 acres over-snow motorized), A (1,677,200 acres motorized, 1,961,100 acres over-snow motorized), and D (1,792,900 acres motorized, 1,987,700 acres over-snow motorized). These acreages reflect what will remain open to over-snow vehicle use based on closure order issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan. The desired conditions for over-snow vehicle use will have that use allowed on 1,500,700 acres under Alternative C, followed by 1,713,000 acres under Alternative B Modified, and 1,859,100 acres under Alternative D. These are the acres where the MA desired conditions allows over-snow vehicle use. These acres reflect the intent for future closures, following site-specific winter travel management. In addition to the differences in MA allocations among the alternatives, the existing area closures on the Forest will be retained under all alternatives. All alternatives have the same acreage of wilderness (MA1a, 93,700 acres). Alternative C (214,800 acres) will have the most land in recommended wilderness (MA1b), followed by Alternatives B Modified (102,700 acres), A (102,500 acres), and D (37,300 acres). MA1a does not allow over-snow motorized use.

Additional direction in the action alternatives that aid in some way in providing security habitat or areas with lower disturbance that can contribute to connectivity include: FW-DC-AR-06 and 07, FW-DC-WL-02 through 05, FW-STD-WL-02 through 03.

The desired condition (FW-DC-WL-17) will be for the KNF to work cooperatively with other agencies when there is a proposal to build or improve highways bisecting the KNF. When crossing structures are part of those highway projects, then human activities on the KNF will not prevent wildlife from using those crossing structures. Structures will facilitate wildlife movement across the highways and reduce the risk of vehicle caused mortality.

The management of KNF lands near future crossing structures is the same for all action alternatives (FW-DC-WL-17, FW-GDL-WL 13 through 15). The KNF does not have control over exactly where and when crossing structures are built for highways because those highways are under another agency's jurisdiction. The KNF must work cooperatively with those other agencies, land owners, and organizations in the development of crossing structures when highway construction or reconstruction would be proposed on roads that bisect KNF lands. This direction aids in maintaining or improving connectivity between blocks of NFS lands, whereas the direction that influences the vegetation aspect of connectivity, provides lower disturbance, or increased security on NFS lands additionally improves or maintains connectivity within the Forest.

GA direction that will be specifically directed at maintaining/improving connectivity includes: GA-DC-WL-BUL 01, GA-DC-WL-CLK-03, GA-DC-WL-FSH-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-02, GA-DC-WL-LIB-01, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01 and 02, GA-DC-WL-TOB-02, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-

01. Every GA will have direction related to connectivity. Combined, this direction provides connectivity within the Forest as well as connectivity to forests west, south, and east, and Canada to the north.

Wilderness areas (MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01), IRAs, and other non-motorized areas (FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA3-DC-WL-01, and MA5abc-DC-WL-01) contribute to secure habitat and connectivity for some species. These areas are generally in more rugged terrain that was historically difficult to log and therefore no roads were built there. These areas also have less human disturbance because of the limits on motorized use (MA1a-STD-AR-01 and 03, MA1b-STD-AR-01, MA1b-STD-AR-03, MA1c-STD-AR-03 and 04).

Special uses can reduce the amount of habitat available and disrupt connectivity (e.g., ski area), or the human disturbance associated with special uses can cause wildlife to avoid an area and thereby disrupt connectivity. The impact may increase as human populations increase and demand on KNF lands increase, and special uses may become a larger contributor to fragmentation in the future. The desired condition that management activities not prevent wildlife from utilizing future wildlife crossing structures will allow connectivity to be maintained or improved in the future with regard to special uses near key barriers to movement such as highways and railroads.

Mineral exploration and mining activities can have impacts on connectivity. Not only may there be a loss of habitat at the mine site itself, but the human activity and noise may deter wildlife from using the immediate vicinity. Additionally, the haul/supply route may necessitate the construction of a new road. Traffic volumes along the haul/supply route may be great enough to create a new barrier to wildlife movement. This impact may be reduced under the action alternatives due to the desired condition for wildlife that includes high use Forest roads as those to be considered for wildlife crossing structures when those roads are constructed or reconstructed.

There may be some small habitat changes due to the collection of forest products. Human presence may also impact connectivity when the permit holders are present to collect the forest products. Generally, the impact of human presence for forest product collection would be expected to be less than the disturbance caused by the recreating public.

Grazing can reduce the amount of forage available for native wildlife, the presence of livestock can cause wildlife to avoid the area, and the presence of grazing permittees or their employees can cause disturbance to wildlife. However, there are few remaining active allotments on the Forest and therefore the effect is not expected to be large. FW-DC-GRZ-01 will also minimize impacts.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Please see the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section at the end of this wildlife analysis for additional information. That section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. What are found below are the cumulative effects that were too unique to the species to group into the “Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species” section.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression likely influenced the pattern of connectivity of habitats on NFS lands. Fire suppression in particular likely changed the patch size and arrangement of different habitats on the landscape. It has led to the encroachment of conifers into natural openings and an increase in tree densities within formerly open canopied stands. Access management has trended towards reducing the amount of motorized routes on the Forest over time and this has likely altered connectivity for species sensitive to human disturbance. Developments on NFS lands, such as mines, recreation facilities (e.g., campgrounds), and special uses also potentially influenced how certain species that are sensitive to human disturbance move through specific areas.

Timber harvest/fuels reduction efforts are possible on all land ownerships, in particular where they are near residences. If these are done in such a way that they restore habitat that has been degraded by fire suppression, then connectivity can be improved. If not, then connectivity can be lost for some species.

Climate change will affect the vegetation component of connectivity. As the climate changes and the amounts and distribution of different habitats on the KNF changes, then connectivity will be changed. The exact amounts and distribution of future habitats is hard to predict, but it can be assumed that some species may see improved connectivity while others may become more isolated. Climate is just one of many variables that determine what kinds of habitat are present on any particular site, and future habitats may be different than what was available historically or currently (Lo et al. 2010). Distributional shifts are one way species respond to climate change, and connectivity is important in determining how well species respond to climate change (pages 90-93 in USDA 2010). Many adaptation opportunities (pages 92-93 in USDA 2010) have been woven into the action alternatives. Not all of the potential ideas/opportunities are appropriate or compatible with the conditions on the Forest. Some of those that are compatible and have been woven into the action alternatives include preventing/controlling invasives, using fire to maintain ecosystems, maintaining healthy/connected/genetically diverse populations, promoting connected landscapes, and managing for resilience by reducing stressors and maintaining disturbance processes. A common theme that ties all of these together is maintaining connectivity, generally by maintaining or improving habitat and natural disturbance processes.

The action alternatives will all contribute in some way towards improved connectivity. Most of the negative cumulative impacts to connectivity stem from human population growth. Private lands, including private timber lands, are being subdivided to provide new home sites. New roads are needed to access these areas, and existing roads will likely see an increase in use. The more homes on the landscape, the less area available to lessen the restrictions on natural processes (e.g., fire). This development of private lands has been ongoing and can be expected to continue into the future.

Private lands may also have timber harvest, and depending on the design this harvest can have positive or negative impacts on connectivity. Historic timber harvest was not designed with maintaining or improving connectivity in mind.

Activities in Canada can also impact connectivity across the border with the US and the KNF. A similar set of effects from timber harvest, private land development, motor vehicle use, and all the other factors discussed above can also occur in Canada. Additionally, there are efforts underway to manage connectivity in Canada that affects the KNF. Two draft maps showing these efforts in Canada were submitted to the KNF by the public during the comment period (comment letter #299 from Headwaters Montana in the project record includes these two maps). These maps were examined and it was determined that the direction in the KNF's revised Forest Plan

would be compatible with those efforts in Canada. The GA direction in the action alternatives in particular will allow wildlife to move within and through the KNF across the border with Canada and the potential connectivity areas there. These efforts in Canada could maintain or improve habitat connectivity across the border with the US and the KNF.

In 2010 British Columbia and the state of Montana signed a memorandum of understanding that recognizes the value of the natural resources in the North Fork of the Flathead River Basin. This area provides connectivity between Canada and the US for wildlife, including wide-ranging carnivores. As part of the MOU, mining, oil, and gas development and coalbed gas extraction would not be permitted. The MOU provides a framework for collaboration between British Columbia and Montana on environmental protection, climate action, and renewable energy (BC and MT MOU 2010). This MOU will maintain wildlife habitat and connectivity between Montana and Canada and will benefit native species using the area.

### **Effects Determination**

Connectivity will be improved, maintained, or made more resilient by varying degrees under all the alternatives. This determination is based in part on:

- The desired condition (FW-DC-WL-17) is for the KNF to work cooperatively with other agencies when there is a proposal to build or improve highways bisecting the KNF. When crossing structures are part of those highway projects, then human activities on the KNF will not prevent wildlife from using those crossing structures. Structures will facilitate wildlife movement across the highways and reduce the risk of vehicle caused mortality;
- The management of KNF lands near future crossing structures will be the same for all action alternatives (FW-DC-WL-17, FW-GDL-WL-13 through 15);
- GA direction that is specifically directed at maintaining/improving connectivity includes: GA-DC-WL-BUL-01, GA-DC-WL-CLK-03, GA-DC-WL-FSH-01, GA-DC-WL-KOO-02, GA-DC-WL-LIB-01, GA-DC-WL-TOB-01 and 02, GA-DC-WL-TOB-02, and GA-DC-WL-YAK-01. Every GA will have direction related to connectivity. Combined, this direction provides connectivity within the Forest as well as connectivity to forests west, south, and east, and Canada to the north;
- Wilderness areas (MA1a-DC-WL-01, MA1b-DC-WL-01, MA1c-DC-WL-01), IRAs, and other non-motorized areas (FW-STD-WL-02 and 03, MA3-DC-WL-01, and MA5abc-DC-WL-01) contribute to secure habitat and connectivity for some species;
- Attaining the desired conditions for vegetation will have a large impact on connectivity. As discussed above, native species will have similar amounts of connectivity habitats as found historically under natural processes if the desired conditions for vegetation are achieved. This is based on the assumption that native species evolved with the natural processes. Therefore, if habitats are restored or maintained near historical conditions and natural processes are allowed to function with less restriction, then wildlife will have the amounts and arrangement of habitats more closely approximating what they had historically; and
- Allowing fire to play a more natural role in these ecosystems through implementation of FW-DC-FIRE-03 and the MA direction would be useful for maintaining and restoring the vegetation component of connectivity that native species evolved with in these ecosystems.

### **Cumulative Effects Common to Most Species**

This section summarizes activities and effects that are common to most species in this analysis. In the synthesizing of the wildlife specialist's report for this FEIS repetitive information from the

individual cumulative effects species' sections were grouped together in order to make this FEIS wildlife analysis more concise. Please see the individual "Cumulative Effects" sections in each species' section in the wildlife analysis of this FEIS for information specific to each species. Also, please see the wildlife specialist's report where the individual species' cumulative effects analyses have been kept separate.

In general, cumulative effects are assessed for the Forest and adjacent lands. In general, the period considered for this analysis is the anticipated life of the Plan, 10-15 years. However, some effects were evaluated over a longer timeframe if they were anticipated to last longer than the Plan (e.g., vegetation changes).

Past timber harvest, fuels reduction, and fire suppression are the most likely past activities that influenced the amount and distribution of habitat on NFS lands. Fire suppression in particular is likely to have changed stand structure and led to encroachment of conifers into natural openings and increased tree densities in formerly open canopied stands. Open roads likely impacted the distribution of snags due to firewood cutting. Road influences have decreased over time as access management has resulted in less routes open to motor vehicle use.

Fuels reduction efforts are possible on all land ownerships, in particular where they are near residences. If these are done in such a way that they restore habitat that has been degraded by fire suppression, then habitat can be improved. If not, then habitat can be lost and connectivity impacted. Continued fire suppression can further degrade habitat on all land ownerships.

Climate change will have the potential to alter the quantity, quality, and distribution of habitats across the Forest. Changes in temperature and precipitation patterns will likely influence vegetation and natural disturbance processes. Combined with past fire suppression and timber management, which has led to less resiliency, there could be an increased risk of large-scale disturbance impacting habitat. Active and passive restoration, including utilizing timber harvest and fuels reduction, that trends habitats towards historic conditions and the desired conditions for vegetation will make habitats more resilient to change. This will not only restore or maintain habitats nearer to what was present under natural disturbance processes which native wildlife evolved with, but will make them more resilient and sustainable.

All the action alternatives will contribute toward maintaining or improving habitat. Timber harvest occurring on private, state, or Canadian lands may impact the distribution, amount, and quality of habitat and may impact connectivity between NFS lands. The effects would depend on whether habitat that is outside of historic conditions is restored, habitat is maintained, and the amount of disturbance to individual animals. The desired conditions for vegetation in the revised Forest Plan will maintain or improve connectivity of habitats on the Forest.

Past mining, ski area development, utility corridor construction, and other land uses on all ownerships has decreased habitat to varying extents.

Grazing has occurred and will continue to take place on lands belonging to various entities, potentially diminishing the amount of habitat for wildlife or displacing them.

Ski area expansion, utility corridor construction, grazing, and mining are all possible future effects that could impact habitat or cause disturbance. The Rock Creek and Montanore mines are currently undergoing analysis and it is unknown exactly when implementation may occur. The Troy Mine is preparing environmental documents for an updated reclamation plan and for further

exploration in the vicinity of the existing mine. Those separate analyses would determine the extent of impacts to species and their habitat.

The Montana State Wildlife Conservation Strategy would improve habitat for a variety of species, and when utilized on non-NFS ownerships should complement habitat improvement or maintenance on NFS lands. Several species analyzed in this document are specifically mentioned in the strategy.

Recreation is likely to increase on all land ownership types, if for no other reason than human population growth. This will increase human disturbance and cause the portions of NFS lands that have lower human disturbance to become more important for wildlife.

Border Patrol activities on the Forest have the potential to cause disturbance through use of roads or trails that are normally closed to motor vehicle use. The exact extent or amount of the impact over the life of the Plan is difficult to predict because many factors could influence the amount and location of Border Patrol activity. Generally speaking, the likelihood of Border Patrol presence increases with decreasing distance from the border.

As on NFS lands, disturbance associated with human presence and most management activities will likely continue. Subdivision of private property has the potential to reduce habitat and increase disturbance, causing displacement. Private land development can lead to a loss of habitat and negatively impact connectivity. This can be especially problematic for small, isolated populations.

Effects in wintering areas or during migration can reduce populations of certain species.

Wind turbines can cause mortality to bats and birds.

Noxious weeds can degrade habitat, including the loss of forage on important winter ranges.



## Air Quality

### Introduction

This section discloses the affected environment and environmental consequences to air quality that would result from implementing different programmatic level management strategies for the KNF. More specifically, the focus of this discussion is on smoke and how the various alternatives could affect smoke production through the use of prescribed fire, the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives, or emissions from unwanted wildfires. Although there are other potential sources of air pollution from management activities that occur on the KNF (e.g., road dust, mining operations, emissions from logging equipment and recreational vehicles), smoke is the most substantial issue. Smoke can create public health issues as well as reduce the ability to view the scenery on the Forest. However, as discussed in the “Fire” and forest “Vegetation” sections of this final EIS, there is strong need to use fire to maintain and restore the fire-adapted ecosystems on the KNF and as a tool to reduce hazardous fuels in the WUI.

In addition to considering how the alternatives may affect air quality from wood smoke, the potential impact of the alternatives on health concerns from asbestos exposure from the former vermiculite mine near Libby is presented.

### Legal and Administrative Framework

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **The Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1955 (as amended in 1967, 1970, 1977, and 1990):** The act is a legal mandate designed to protect public health and welfare from air pollution. Although this policy creates the foundation for air quality regulation, states and counties are often responsible for implementation of the air quality standards. The task of identifying National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) is assigned by the Clean Air Act to the EPA. The EPA evaluates and updates these standards every 5 years. For the state of Montana, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MT DEQ) both enforces these standards and is allowed to identify stricter regulations (National Wildfire Coordination Group, 2001).

The EPA defines 6 of 33 known air pollutants as criteria pollutants for which NAAQS are set. The most common violation of a NAAQS from smoke is that of the PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard. Wildfires are considered a naturally occurring event from which smoke impacts may not be prevented. For natural events, state DEQ's are required to have Natural Emergency Action Plans that identifies procedures such as notifying the public of health impacts of smoke and how to decrease and/or minimize exposure. Prescribed fires that are ignited by land managers are considered anthropogenic, and therefore, subject to regulation.

Table 89 displays the NAAQS for the six criteria pollutants identified by EPA:

**Table 89. National Ambient Air Quality Standards**

Pollutant	Primary Standards		Secondary Standards	
	Level	Averaging Time	Level	Averaging Time
Carbon Monoxide	9 ppm (10 mg/m <sup>3</sup> )	8-hour	None	
	35 ppm (40 mg/m <sup>3</sup> )	1-hour		
Lead	0.15 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Rolling 3-Month Average	Same as Primary	

	Primary Standards		Secondary Standards	
Pollutant	Level	Averaging Time	Level	Averaging Time
	1.5 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Quarterly Average	Same as Primary	
<u>Nitrogen Dioxide</u>	53 ppb	Annual (Arithmetic Average)	Same as Primary	
	100 ppb	1-hour	None	
<u>Particulate Matter</u> (PM <sub>10</sub> )	150 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	24-hour	Same as Primary	
<u>Particulate Matter</u> (PM <sub>2.5</sub> )	15.0 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Annual (Arithmetic Average)	Same as Primary	
	35 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	24-hour	Same as Primary	
<u>Ozone</u>	0.075 ppm (2008 std	8-hour	Same as Primary	
	0.08 ppm (1997 std)	8-hour	Same as Primary	
	0.12 ppm	1-hour	Same as Primary	
<u>Sulfur Dioxide</u>	0.03 ppm	Annual (Arithmetic Average)	0.5 ppm	3-hour
	0.14 ppm	24-hour		
	75 ppb	1-hour	None	

From <http://www.epa.gov/air/criteria.html>

Areas where NAAQS are frequently met, or exceeded, are considered areas of non-attainment by the EPA. To prevent NAAQS violations, Montana has designated these areas and other areas of concern as Impact Zones. In accordance with the Interim Policy, Montana also has a smoke management plan which provides some flexibility should a NAAQS violations occur due to smoke. The combination of actions a state takes to regulate smoke, track and monitor pollutants, and enforce violations are known as a state implementation plan.

The Clean Air Act Amendment of 1977 designates mandatory visibility protection of Class I Airsheds which include wilderness areas established before 1977 that are greater than 5,000 acres. The Wilderness Act of 1964 mandates that the Forest Service preserves and protects the natural condition of designated wilderness areas (regardless of Class I designation), including the intrinsic wilderness value of air quality.

Currently the Forest Service participates in an organization known as the Montana-Idaho Airshed Group for prescribed burns within the state of Montana. Group members submit prescribed burns to the smoke management unit for daily, site-specific approval. The smoke management unit is responsible for making sound and timely decisions to maximize the amount of smoke being put in the air (acres burned) and minimizes adverse air quality impacts based on individual airsheds throughout Montana and Idaho. Adherence to the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group Operating Guide (2010) is the current accepted smoke management plan for the state of Montana.

In addition, air quality is addressed for every prescribed burn in the individual prescribed fire plan. The Forest Service Handbook requires a documented burn plan that contains all of the elements outlined in the 2008 Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide. This guide prompts the burn plan author to address all laws and regulations concerning smoke management as well as the potential for localized nuisance smoke impacts.

In 1998 the EPA released the *Interim Air Quality Policy on Wildland and Prescribed Fires* (Interim Policy) (US EPA 1998). The document was published with the intent of integrating two public policy goals, “(1) to allow fire to function, as nearly as possible, in its natural role in

maintaining healthy wildland ecosystems, and (2) to protect public health and welfare by mitigating the impacts of air pollutant emissions on air quality and visibility.” This document recognizes the goal of the National Fire Plan (1995, revised in 2001) to implement fuel reduction projects in the WUI and return fire to landscapes, and the impacts this will have on air quality.

Wildfire smoke can produce three of six criteria pollutants the EPA has set maximum standards for to protect human and environmental health. These include carbon monoxide, particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds that can produce ground-level ozone (<http://www.epa.gov/air/ozonepollution/>). Seventy percent of smoke emissions are made up of small particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> or particulate matter smaller than 2.5 micrometers) which has been proven to cause adverse health effects in humans (<http://www.epa.gov/pm/health.html>). Because of this, wildfire smoke from naturally ignited fire and prescribed fire poses a potential health threat to the public. Another smoke emission that poses health risks to humans is carbon monoxide, which can cause short-term health related problems for firefighters. Carbon monoxide rapidly mixes with surrounding air at short distances from a burn area, therefore, poses little to no risk to the general public (Sandberg and Dost 1990). Ground-level ozone, although not a direct product of smoke emissions is a concern due to its effect on lung function and plant growth.

The small size of PM<sub>2.5</sub> makes these particles highly efficient at scattering light, causing visibility issues, and contributing to what the EPA has called “Regional Haze.” The Regional Haze Rule, issued by the EPA in 1999, addresses improving visibility in Class I airsheds such as wilderness areas and National Parks. Regardless of whether smoke violates air quality standards, localized impacts of burning can cause visibility issues on public roadways. Nuisance smoke is defined by the EPA (US EPA 1990) as the amount of smoke in the ambient air that interferes with a right or privilege common to members of the public, including the use or enjoyment of public or private resources.

In Montana, the Forest Service is required to annually obtain an open burning permit from MT DEQ in order to conduct prescribed burning statewide. In addition, the Forest Service participates in an organization known as the Montana-Idaho Airshed Group for prescribed burns within the state of Montana. Group members submit prescribed burns to the smoke management unit for daily, site-specific approval. The smoke management unit is responsible for making sound and timely decisions to maximize the amount of smoke being put in the air (acres burned) and minimizes adverse air quality impacts based on individual airsheds throughout Montana and Idaho. During the fall burning season (September – December), the smoke management unit coordinates with MT DEQ on burn approvals. During the winter season (December – February), the smoke management unit is not in operation; however, burning can potentially take place with special approval from MT DEQ. Montana DEQ also requires burners to use Best Available Control Technology. Their policy defines Best Available Control Technology as: those techniques and methods of controlling emission of pollutants from an existing or proposed open burning source which limit those emissions to the maximum degree which the Department of Environmental Quality determines, on a case-by-case basis, is achievable for that source, taking into account impacts on energy use, the environment, and the economy and any other costs, including the cost to the source.

For Lincoln County, Montana, special rules have been implemented concerning air quality. A special permit, as well as daily burn approval, must be granted from the Libby Air Quality District. These special regulations exist to protect the Libby and Eureka Impact Zones.

### Key Indicator

- Ambient air quality and visibility.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

A qualitative assessment of smoke emissions and consequences to ambient air quality and visibility was used as the indicator for effects to air quality. The actual quantitative smoke that would be produced by each alternative and the impacts on air quality are too variable to accurately predict. Potential emissions from unwanted wildfires are difficult to predict as they would vary depending upon site-specific vegetation and fuels conditions, ignitions, weather, and available suppression resources. Emissions from the use of prescribe fire and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives is also difficult to predict quantitatively. Therefore, the comparison of alternatives is based on a qualitative assessment of the relative amounts and timing of smoke that may be emitted by the alternatives.

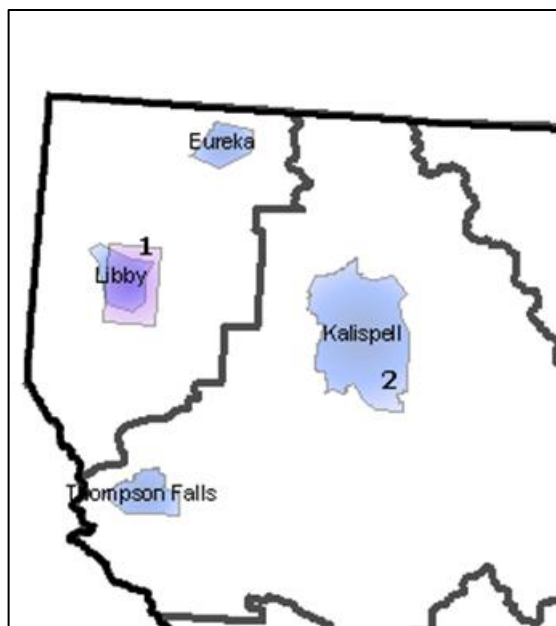
### Changes between Draft to Final

A discussion of the asbestos related health concerns in the vicinity of Libby was added to this “Air Quality” section.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

Because the area contained within the KNF boundary is relatively rural, non-forest pollution sources, such as industry and heavy automobile traffic, have not greatly impacted air quality. Industrial sources of pollution within the Forest may include timber and mining operations. Dust from forest roads may also contribute to fine particulates in the air. Contributions from forest operations are generally minimal and have not been shown to contribute to NAAQS violations. Voluntary smoke management from forest industry, state, and federal partners has helped prevent NAAQS violations and reduced nuisance smoke.

Areas of concern within the Forest include the impact zones of Eureka and Libby. Libby is also classified as a non-attainment area for the PM<sub>2.5</sub> annual standard (see figure 32). Impact zones are created for populated areas where air quality concerns to public health arise as NAAQS are sometimes exceeded or close to exceeding. Areas of population generally exist in valley bottoms where mixing and dispersion of air is reduced. Sources of pollution within these impact zones, including smoke, are closely monitored and regulated.



**Figure 32. Western Montana Airsheds and Impact Zones taken from the MT/ID Airshed Group 2010 Operations Guide**

The MT DEQ has a network of air quality monitors throughout the state. Real-time data is tracked to identify times of poor air quality and notify the public of potential concerns. The MT/ID Airshed Group accesses this information in making burn approval decisions.

Because of the health impacts caused by wildfire smoke, the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group created the *Montana-Idaho Interagency Smoke Management Strategy for the Mitigation of Public Health and Welfare Impacts Caused by Smoke from Unplanned Ignitions* (NRCG 2010). Although this document is not intended to be legally enforceable, the Integration Strategy is meant to communicate roles and responsibilities (for land managers as well as others), inform the public, identify coordination activities, provide lessons learned and examples of good smoke management, and provide for future revision.

Visibility monitoring is done through the Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments Network, which exists through cooperation efforts from the EPA, state regulatory agencies, and federal land managers. This monitoring network establishes current air quality conditions for Class I areas and tracks progress towards the national visibility goal outlined in the Clean Air Act. The interagency monitoring of protected visual environments provides a standardized system to identify long-term trend and determine the types of pollutants and sources responsible for visibility impairments (US EPA, March 2001).

Region 1 of the Forest Service currently has what is called the “USFS R1 Air Quality Monitoring Plan” (USDA Forest Service 1997 April). Monitoring protocols for air quality related values for Class I areas and wilderness air quality values are defined and documented. Part of the monitoring plan includes participation in the Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual Environments Network.

In the Rainy Creek-Alexander area northeast of Libby, Montana, a vermiculite mine was in operation on private land for about 70 years. The mine closed in 1990. In 2002, the mine and some areas around Libby and Troy were placed on the EPA’s National Priorities List for

Superfund Sites due to contamination from amphibole asbestos (see <http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby/background.html>). A portion of the land within the boundary of the National Priority List area for Libby is administered by the KNF (see <http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby/>). Asbestos is a recognized human carcinogen and is classified as a hazardous substance (40 CFR 302.4). Inhaled asbestos is associated with three major diseases: Asbestosis (scarring of lung tissue that eventually restricts one's ability to inhale); Lung Cancer (asbestos increases the risk of lung cancer, especially in combination with exposure to tobacco smoke); and Mesothelioma (cancer of the lung lining and chest wall) (see <http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby/healthrisk.html>). Although oral ingestion and dermal exposure routes may exist, health risks from these exposures are low compared to health risks from inhalation (USDHHS 2001). Chronic exposure is a significant risk factor for asbestos-related disease, although brief episodic exposures may contribute to disease (USDHHS 2008).

In 2006, researchers discovered that amphibole asbestos fibers were present in the crevices of tree bark near the former mine site (Ward et al. 2006, Ward et al. 2012). Fibers were also located in the duff layer of the soil. Subsequent research evaluated potential asbestos exposures from firewood-harvesting simulations, from burning contaminated firewood, and from activities designed to simulate various types of work that Forest Service employees might undertake in the area (Hart et al. 2007, Ward et al. 2009, and Hart et al. 2009). As a result of these research activities, the Forest Service developed an informational brochure for dissemination to the public that contains precautions to consider when recreating or harvesting firewood in the area (USDA 2009). In addition, until more definitive information is available regarding the potential risks of conducting management activities in this area, the Forest Service is taking precautionary measures such as changing the way it conducts fire suppression activities in the area and modifying or delaying tree thinning and other forest management activities that could potentially put employees or the public at risk.

The Forest Service, Montana Department of Natural Resources, EPA, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health are working together to research the question of whether or not asbestos fibers are released in wildfire smoke. Ongoing as well as future research is planned by this group. The Montana Logging Association is also working with the agencies mentioned above on questions related to how logging or other vegetation management activities may impact employee and public health issues associated with the asbestos. In addition, the KNF collaborated with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health during the summer of 2012 to conduct more research/monitoring on the potential asbestos exposure of employees or contractors while doing typical work chores in the field.

## Environmental Consequences

### *Management Direction*

All of the alternatives contain essentially the same Forest Plan direction regarding the desire and need to meet federal, state, and local air quality standards and direction. The 1987 Forest Plan contains forestwide objectives (page II-6) and standards (Air Quality standard #13) and the action alternatives contain forestwide desired conditions (FW-DC-AQ-01) and guidelines (FW-GDL-AQ-01) that are similar in nature. Therefore, the direction that is specific to air quality in the various alternatives would have similar consequences. That is, the direction is designed to meet applicable laws and regulations.

The management direction that could have consequences to smoke production includes direction that would affect how much prescribed fire would occur, how much natural, unplanned ignition

is managed to meet resource objectives, and how much unwanted wildfire may occur. The alternatives do contain plan components related to fire that could influence these elements and they are summarized below.

Regarding the asbestos health issues associated with the Rainy Creek-Alexander area, the potential contamination of national forest lands had not been identified as a concern at the time the 1987 Forest Plan was developed. Therefore, the 1987 Forest Plan does not contain any direction related to that issue. In contrast, all of the action alternatives associated with the revised Forest Plan contains direction related to the continued coordination and cooperation of the KNF with other agencies to evaluate and manage health risks associated with the area and to design any management activities in the area to mitigate the risks (GA-DC-MIN-LIB-01). In addition, in the event of wildfires occurring in the area, direction was added to all the action alternatives to manage a wildfire incident to limit firefighter and public exposure to the asbestos (GA-DC-FIRE-LIB-02).

### *General Effects*

Because prescribed fire smoke is closely regulated by the smoke management unit, any additional prescribed fire acres would have to be accomplished on burn days where smoke dispersion is good and the Impact Zones are not affected.

The Cabinet Mountain Wilderness within the KNF boundary is classified as a Class I Airshed. Smoke from prescribed fire, natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives, and wildfires all may cause visibility impairments.

Smoke from unwanted wildfires is predicted to remain the same across all the alternatives, including the no-action alternative. The difference in smoke inputs during wildfire season would be due to the contribution of the smoke from allowing natural, unplanned ignitions to be managed to meet resource objectives. Because natural, unplanned ignitions being managed to meet resource objectives is still considered a natural event, smoke from these events is currently unregulated by MT DEQ. The effects of the added smoke input to the airshed during the summer may or may not be adverse. Because managing natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives is most suitable for backcountry areas away from human populations, air quality effects should be minimal to public health.

The different alternatives have varying levels of emphasis on managing natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives. Because of this, the effect on air quality may differ between the alternatives. Alternative C places the greatest influence on natural disturbance processes, including wildfire. Based on this goal, this alternative could potentially create the greatest amount of smoke. Alternative D places management emphasis on active management, including timber harvest. Although backcountry areas would still encourage managing natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives, the acreage of the backcountry MA is slightly reduced which could reduce the amount of acres burned. In terms of air quality affects, Alternative B Modified lies somewhere between C and D. Not as much emphasis is placed on natural disturbances as Alternative C; however, the opportunity for managing natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives under this alternative in terms of backcountry acres is greater than Alternative D.

Smoke produced from managing natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives will vary spatially and temporally. The decision to manage a natural, unplanned ignition to meet resource objectives affects many resources, including air quality. Despite the lack of specific air-

quality regulations on natural, unplanned ignitions that are managed to meet resource objectives, consideration is given to the effect the fire will have on air quality during the decision process. Working with the MT DEQ and avoiding decisions that will cause health and welfare concerns to the public will minimize the effects of managing natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives on air quality.

Concerning the asbestos issue, all of the alternatives respond equally to this concern. Even though the No-Action alternative does not contain specific direction related to this concern, the KNF has, and will continue to manage the area according to recommendations and input from EPA and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. As new research and risk assessments are conducted, the KNF will adjust management practices as appropriate to provide for human safety.

### Cumulative Effects

Air quality is a complex issue. Inputs of pollutants into an airshed can be from automobile exhaust, industry, dust from driving on dry roads or wind events, wood stoves, agricultural burning, and wildland fires. The range of sources of these pollutants, climatology, and topography all influence air quality conditions at any given location. The air quality on the KNF is affected by actions occurring hundreds of miles away, such as agricultural burning and/or tilling (Hammer 2003). If a neighboring national forest chooses to manage a natural, unplanned ignition to meet resource objectives, this decision may have air quality impacts on the KNF and vice versa.

In the case of managing a natural, unplanned ignition to meet resource objectives, the Forest Service may choose to allow the fire to burn and perform a natural role, regardless of whether initial attack fire resources have the ability to suppress the ignition. Certain circumstances will limit the KNF from managing natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives, including air quality. While there is not specific regulation addressing wildfires, the MT DEQ still maintains the authority to enforce NAAQS, including stopping land managers from allowing a fire to burn during times of poor air quality.



## Human Uses and Designations of the Forest

This section includes the following resources:

- Access and Recreation
- Lands/Special Uses
- Inventoried Roadless Areas
- Designated Wilderness, Wilderness Study Area, Recommended Wilderness
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Research Natural Areas
- Special Areas
- Cultural Resources
- American Indian Rights and Interests

## *Access and Recreation*

### **Introduction**

The focus of outdoor recreation management is to provide a range of environmentally sustainable opportunities in natural settings in order to meet the needs and desires of visitors. People have always enjoyed relatively free access to recreation opportunities on federal public lands, although recreation was not a high priority when national forests were first created. Recreation use was present at that time, but it was an unstated secondary benefit, enjoyed by a relative few. However, since the end of World War II, demand for outdoor recreation on public land has grown. This section covers Transportation Systems, including Road and Trail Management Objectives, Travel Management, and Road and Trail Maintenance; and Recreation, including Recreation Setting, Developed Recreation, Dispersed Recreation, Recreation Special Use Authorizations, and Scenery/Landscape Management.

Access, using roads and trails, is associated with virtually every activity that takes place on the KNF. Roads and trails accommodate many purposes such as: outdoor recreation, fire suppression, wildlife management, transport of natural resources such as logs and minerals, firewood gathering, private in-holding access, electronic site and utility corridor maintenance, and managing and monitoring forest resources.

Modes of vehicle travel on the Forest include: large commercial trucks, cars, pickups, four-wheel drive vehicles, over-snow vehicles, off-road vehicles (e.g., motorcycles, ATVs), mountain bikes, and wheelchairs. Other non-vehicular travel modes include cross-country/back-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog sledding, horseback riding, and hiking.

These various forms of travel may occur on designated paved, aggregate, or native surface roads, and trails managed for motorized and/or non-motorized use.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (30 Stat. 11, as amended):** This act authorizes the establishment of national forests.
- **Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of June 12, 1960 (P.L.86-517, 74 Stat.215):** This act provides direction to the NFS lands to provide access and recreation opportunities. The act states, “The policy of Congress is that national forests are established and administered for outdoor recreation...”
- **Term Permit Act of March 4, 1915 (P.L. 63-293, Ch. 144, 38 Stat. 1101, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 497):** This act provides direction to the NFS lands to authorize occupancy for a wide variety of uses through permits not exceeding 30 years.
- **National Forest Roads and Trails Act of October 13, 1964 (P.L. 88-657, 78 Stat. 1089, as amended):** This act declared that an adequate system of roads and trails be constructed and maintained to meet the increasing demand for recreation and other uses. This act authorizes road and trail systems for the national forests. It authorizes granting of easements across NFS lands, construction and financing of maximum economy roads (FSM 7705), and imposition of requirements on road users for maintaining and reconstructing roads, including cooperative deposits for that work.

- **The Wilderness Act of September 9, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131(note), 1131-1136):** This act establishes the National Wilderness Preservation System to be administered for the "...use and enjoyment of the American people..."
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (P.L. 88-578, 78 Stat. 897 as amended; 16 U.S.C. 460l-4(note); 460l-4 thru 6a, 460l-7 thru 460l-10, 460l-10a-d, 460l-11):** "The purposes of this act are to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring accessibility to all citizens of the United States of America...such quality and quantity of outdoor recreation resources...providing funds for:" 1. States for acquisition, planning, and development of recreation facilities and; 2. Federal acquisition and development of certain lands and other areas.
- **Highway Safety Act of September 9, 1966 (P.L. 89-564, 80 Stat. 731, as amended):** This act authorizes state and local governments and participating federal agencies to identify and survey accident locations; to design, construct, and maintain roads in accordance with safety standards; to apply sound traffic control principles and standards; and to promote pedestrian safety.
- **Architectural Barriers Act of August 12, 1968 (P.L. 90-480, 82 Stat. 718 51 U.S.C. 4151-4154, 4154a, 4155-4157):** This act establishes additional requirements to ensure that buildings, facilities, rail passenger cars, and vehicles are accessible to individuals with disabilities. It covers architecture and design, transportation, and communication elements of recreational site planning and development.
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of October 2, 1968 (P.L. 90-542, 82 Stat. 906, as amended):** This act establishes a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with three classes of river systems: wild, scenic, and recreation. The purpose of the act was to protect the river "...for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations."
- **National Trails System Act of October 2, 1968 (P.L. 90-543, 82 Stat.919, as amended):** This act establishes the National Trails System and authorizes planning, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of trails established by Congress or the Secretary of Agriculture.
- **Federal Aid Highway Act of 1968, as amended (23 U.S.C. 109(a) and (h), 144, 151, 319, and 351):** Establishes the National Bridge Inspection Standards (23 CFR Part 650, Subpart C) and the requirement that each state have a current inventory of bridges on all public roads, including NFS roads open to public travel (FSM 1535.11).
- **Rehabilitation Act of September 26, 1973 (P.L. 93-112, Title V, 87 Stat. 390, as amended; 29 U.S.C. 791, 793-794, 794a, 794b):** This act requires that programs and activities conducted by federal agencies and by entities that receive funding from, or operate under a permit from, federal agencies provide an equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate in an integrated setting, as independently as possible. The only exception to the requirement is when the program would be fundamentally altered if changes were made solely for the purpose of accessibility.
- **Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of August 17, 1974 (P.L. 93-378, 88 Stat. 476, as amended):** This act declares (per Sec. 10) that "...the installation of a proper system of transportation to service the NFS ....shall be carried forward in time to meet anticipated needs on an economical and environmentally sound basis..."
- **Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (P.L. 94-579, 90 Stat. 2742, as amended):** This act declares (per Sec. 102) that "...the public lands be managed in a manner that...will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use."

- **Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-599, as amended). Supersedes the Forest Highway Act of 1958:** Authorizes appropriations for forest highways and public lands highways. Establishes criteria for forest highways; defines forest roads, forest development roads, and forest development trails (referred to as “NFS roads” and “NFS trails” in Forest Service regulations and directives); and limits the size of projects performed by Forest Service employees on forest roads. Establishes the Federal Lands Highway Program.
- **American Indian Religious Freedom Act of August 11, 1978 (42 U.S.C. 1996):** This act states the policy of the United States to preserve and protect the rights of Native Americans to reasonable access and use NFS lands for exercising their traditional cultural religious beliefs and practices. This act does not grant authority to issue authorizations.
- **Rails to Trails (National Trails System Improvements Act of October 4, 1988 (P.L. 100-470, 102 Stat. 2281; 16 U.S.C. 1241(note); 12 U.S.C. 1248(note))):** This act was enacted to facilitate the development of trail systems by federal, state, or local governments on railroad rights-of-way that may be suitable for trail use when such rights-of-way are abandoned.
- **Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of November 18, 1988 (P.L. 100-691, 102 Stat. 4546; 16 U.S.C. 4301 note, 4301 to 4309):** This act was enacted to secure, protect, and preserve significant caves on federal lands for the perpetual use, enjoyment, and benefit of all people.
- **American with Disabilities Act (ADA), 1990, 42 U.S.C. 1201**
- **Ski Fees, Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of November 12, 1996 (Pub. L. 104-333, div. I, Title VII, Sec. 701, 110 Stat. 4182; 16 U.S.C. 497c):** Section 701 of this act:
  - Establishes a system to calculate fees for ski area permits issued under the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. 497b);
  - Provides for holders of ski area permits issued under other authorities to elect this permit fee system (FSH 2709.11, sec. 38.03a);
  - Includes provisions concerning compliance with NEPA when issuing permits for existing ski areas (FSM 2721.61f and FSH 2709.11, sec. 41.61b); and
  - Withdraws leasable and locatable minerals, subject to valid existing rights (FSH 2709.11, sec. 41.61c).
- **Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of October 30, 2000 (P. L. 106-393, 114 Stat. 1607; 16 U.S.C.500 note):** This act provides provisions to make additional investments in, and create additional employment opportunities through, projects that improve the maintenance of existing infrastructure, implement stewardship objectives that enhance forest ecosystems, and restore and improve land health and water quality.
- **Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of December 8, 2004 (P.L. 108-447, as amended):** This act gives the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior the authority to establish, modify, charge, and collect recreation fees at federal recreational lands where a certain level of amenities have been developed.
- **Omnibus Public Land Management Act of March 30, 2009 (P.L. 111-11, Title V, Section 5205):** This act designated the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail including the section that crosses the KNF.
- **Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st-Century Act of July 6, 2012 (P.L. 112-141):** Replaces the Federal Lands Highway Program with the Federal Lands Transportation Program and Federal Lands Access Program. This act authorizes funding for federal lands

transportation facilities and federal lands access transportation facilities under a unified program with policy similar to federal-aid highways and other public transportation facilities. It requires Federal Land Management Agencies to identify a comprehensive inventory of public federal lands transportation facilities that, at a minimum, includes the transportation facilities that provide access to high-use federal recreation sites or federal economic generators.

- **Executive Order 11644 (as amended):** Establishes policy and procedure "...that will ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resources of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands, and to minimize conflicts among the various uses of those lands."
- **Executive Order 12862:** Setting Customer Service Standards requires information about quantity and quality of recreation visits for national forest plans.

#### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

- **36 CFR 212** – Travel Management
- **36 CFR 219** – Planning
- **36 CFR 251** – Land Uses
- **36 CFR 261** – Prohibitions
- **36 CFR 290** – Cave Resources
- **36 CFR 291** – Occupancy and Use of Developed Sites and Areas of Concentrated Public Use
- **36 CFR 293** – Wilderness-Primitive Areas
- **36 CFR 294** – Special Areas
- **36 CFR 297** – Wild and Scenic Rivers

#### *Other Policy and Guidance*

- **National Best Management Practices for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands Volume 1: National Core BMP Technical Guide, April 2012:** The first volume of guidance for the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and National Best Management Practices (BMP) Program. The National BMP program was developed to improve agency performance and accountability in managing water quality consistent with the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and state water quality programs. Current Forest Service policy directs compliance with required CWA permits and state regulations and requires the use of BMPs to control nonpoint source pollution to meet applicable water quality standards and other CWA requirements. It includes road management activity BMPs for construction, operation, and maintenance for roads and motorized trails.

#### **Key Indicators**

- Percent of the Forest and location of areas where roads and trails may be considered for motor vehicle use;
- Percent of the Forest and location of areas where over-snow vehicle use is allowed;
- Percent of the Forest and location of areas where mechanized use is allowed;
- Percent of the Forest and location managed in the various recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classes; and
- Percent of the Forest managed for various scenic integrity objectives categories.

## Methodology and Analysis Process

For comparative purposes each alternative was analyzed for the total number of acres, by MA allocation, where motor vehicle use may be considered, over-snow vehicle use would be allowed, over-snow vehicle use would be consistent with desired conditions, or mechanized use would be allowed.

Each MA identifies the desired condition and any restrictions (standards) to motor vehicle use, over-snow vehicle use, or mechanized use. GIS was then used to calculate the number of acres for each MA across the Forest. Acres currently closed to over-snow vehicle use because of winter range were also included. The summary acres where motor vehicle use, over-snow vehicle use, and mechanized use would be desired or allowed within each alternative were then calculated.

Note: Where **motor-vehicle use** is discussed in this FEIS relative to road, trail, and area or cross-country travel, it includes all types of motor vehicles as defined at 212.1 **except** over-snow vehicles. This generally indicates wheeled motor vehicles such as automobiles, four-wheel drive vehicles, and OHVs (except over-snow), but also includes those vehicles that have the driving wheels moving inside endless tracks (or are capable of such conversion) when operating outside snow-covered ground conditions.

**Over-snow vehicles** are defined as motor vehicles designed for use over snow that run on a track or tracks and/or a ski or skis, **while in use over snow** (36 CFR 212.1). Effects of these two recreation opportunities are analyzed as separate activities in this FEIS and are referred to as either “motor vehicle use” or “over-snow vehicle use.”

When the term motorized access or motorized recreation is used, it refers to all vehicles — both motor-vehicles (excluding over-snow) and over-snow vehicles.

Each alternative was analyzed for the total number of acres and percentage of the Forest in various ROS classes and categories of scenic integrity objectives. The inventoried ROS was used along with the desired condition range for ROS for each MA. Each MA includes desired conditions for the ROS class and scenic integrity objectives that is most appropriate for management of that area of the Forest.

## Changes between Draft and Final

**Change in Terminology:** The DEIS and draft Forest Plan used the term “wheeled motor vehicle use” when referring to designated road, trail, and area motorized recreation opportunities in the absence of snow-covered ground conditions. The term over-snow vehicle is used when referring to winter (snow-covered ground conditions) motorized recreation opportunities. (See the FEIS glossary for the full definitions of these terms per 36 CFR 212.) The descriptive “wheeled” was included to contrast with over-snow vehicle use as the two recreation opportunities are considered and analyzed separately as distinct activities in the environmental analysis.

However, “wheeled motor vehicle use” is not consistent with the definitions at 36 CFR 212 or current KNF motor vehicle use maps (MVUMs). The legal order on the KNF MVUM states: “It is prohibited to possess or operate a motor vehicle on NFS lands on the KNF other than in accordance with these designations (CFR 261.13). . . . This map does not display nonmotorized uses, over-snow uses, or other facilities and attractions on the KNF. . . .”

Where over-snow vehicle use is legally allowed or prohibited is established by existing legal orders under §261.50 and §261.54.

Therefore, for clarification and consistency with existing regulation and law, the FEIS and revised Forest Plan drop the “wheeled” descriptive and simply use the term motor vehicle use when referring to road, trail, and area designations for non-over snow recreation use. This does not change any existing or analyzed recreation opportunity and only clarifies terminology.

**Update to Acres Allowing Road Construction:** These acres were corrected in the FEIS to reflect MA direction.

**Site-Specific Changes in Trail and Area Motor Vehicle Use, Over-snow Use, Mechanized Use, and Hand Held Motorized Use:** The miles of trail and acres of area by use have been updated in the final EIS. For action alternatives trails and areas where motorized, mechanized, or hand held motorized uses are allowed were updated to include site-specific restrictions in MA1b (recommended wilderness) and MA4 (Research Natural Areas). Trails (within, or accessing) and areas within MA1b or MA4, will have a legal closure issued in conjunction with the final ROD.

**Analysis of Acres Where Over-Snow Vehicle Use is Consistent with Desired Conditions:** In addition, analysis was completed on acres where over-snow vehicle use would be consistent with desired conditions. Management areas 2 (eligible wild rivers), 3 (botanical, zoological, and historic special areas), and 5a (backcountry year-round non-motorized) have desired conditions of year-round non-motorized opportunities.

**Update to Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Analysis:** The DEIS and draft Forest Plan displayed acres of ROS two different ways, ROS as inventoried and ROS desired condition by MA. The draft Forest Plan desired condition for MA6 ROS was Roaded Natural. In the revised Forest Plan, the desired condition for MA6 has been updated to a range from Semi-Primitive Non-motorized to Roaded Natural.

A combination of the inventoried ROS and the MA ROS was used for analyzing acres by ROS for each alternative in the FEIS. The revised Forest Plan indicates the ROS or range of ROS for each MA. Where a range of ROS is given for an MA, the acres of inventoried ROS were used to determine acres by ROS.

Table 58 in the DEIS incorrectly displayed ROS for the IPNF, and has been changed to display ROS for the KNF.

**Update to Number of Recreation Sites, National Visitor Use Monitoring Information:** The number of recreation sites (developed, dispersed, and privately provided) have been updated based on additional dispersed sites inventory and data correction. National Visitor Use information has been updated with 2012 revisions of Round 2 data. While Round 3 data was collected in 2012, the final report is not yet available.

## Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

### *Transportation System*

Across the KNF there are approximately 7,863 miles of road and 1,500 miles of trails under Forest Service jurisdiction. Additional miles of roads cross the Forest, but are managed and administered by other jurisdictions such as state, county, or private.

National Forest System roads and trails are an infrastructure capital investment that support forest management activities and recreation access and are considered physical assets. Since the end of WWII, an extensive system of roads and trails has been constructed. This transportation system has continual management and maintenance needs. The roads provide access for administration, utilization, and protection of NFS lands. Early trails served as routes for migration, foraging, hunting, trapping, and early forest management. Many of those original trails provide recreation access today. The direction for effective and efficient management of NFS roads and trails is founded in laws, regulations, and agency directives.

One part of that direction requires management objectives be established for all NFS routes. These management objectives take into consideration: MA direction; needs for coordination of uses; access management, and the design, operation, and maintenance criteria.

### Road Management Objectives

In order to develop road management objectives, a variety of descriptive conditions are used. The more prominent ones are:

- **Functional Class** – The way a road services land and resource management needs, and the character of service it provides.
  - **Arterial** – A road that provides service to large land areas and usually connects with other arterial roads or public highways.
  - **Collector** – A road that serves smaller areas than an arterial road and usually connects arterial roads to local roads or terminal facilities.
  - **Local** – A road that connects a terminal facility with collector roads, arterial roads, or public highways and usually serves a single purpose involving intermittent use.

This branching system of arterial, collector, and local roads is the network that provides access to NFS lands. Generally, most arterial and collector roads are aggregate surfaced, although some have a paved surface. Most local roads are native surfaced. Table 90 displays the miles by functional class.

**Table 90. Summary of KNF Roads by Functional Class**

Functional Class	Miles
Arterial	324
Collector	2,264
Local	5,254
Not assigned	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,863</b>

Source: Infra: Travel Routes 12/2012

- **Traffic Service Level** – The significant traffic characteristics and operating conditions for a road.
  - **Level A** – Free flowing, mixed traffic; stable, smooth surface. Provides safe service to all traffic.
  - **Level B** – Congested during heavy traffic, slower speeds and periodic dust; accommodates any legal size load or vehicle.



- **Level C** – Interrupted traffic flow, limited passing facilities, may not accommodate some vehicles. Low design speeds. Unstable surface under certain traffic or weather.
- **Level D** – Traffic flow is slow and may be blocked by management activities. Two-way traffic is difficult; backing may be required. Rough and irregular surface. Travel with low clearance vehicles is difficult. Single purpose facility.

Table 91 displays the miles by traffic service level.

**Table 91. Summary of KNF Roads by Traffic Service Level**

Traffic Service Level	Miles
Level A	124
Level B	143
Level C	1,906
Level D	5,164
Not Assigned	526
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,863</b>

Source: Infra: Travel Routes 12/2012

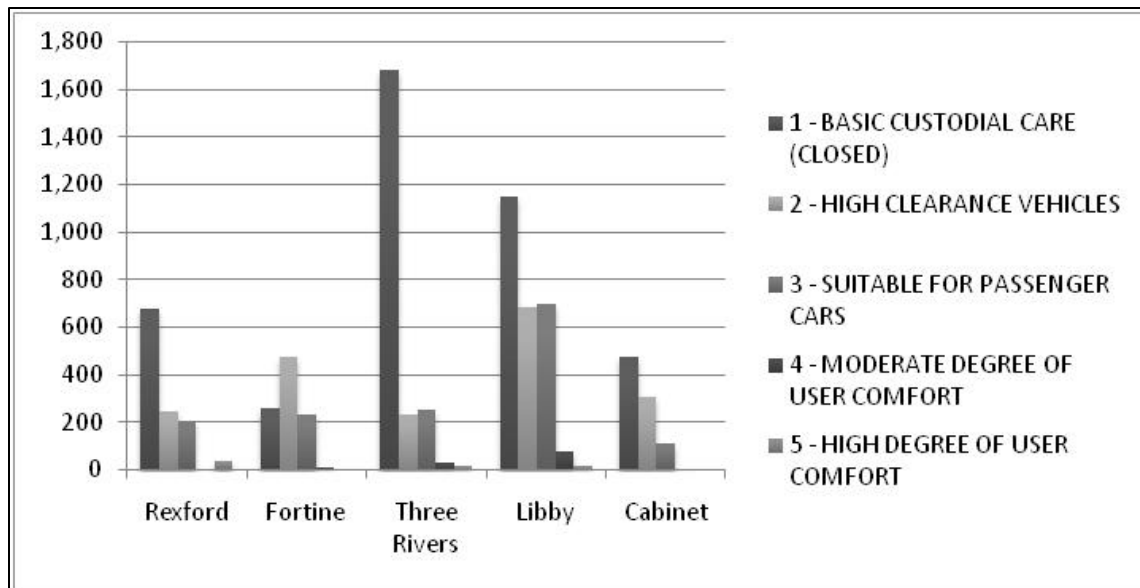
- **Operational Maintenance Level** – The maintenance level currently assigned to the road considering today's needs, road condition, budget constraints, and environmental concerns. In other words, it defines the level to which the road is currently being maintained.
  - **Level 5** – Assigned to roads that provide a high degree of user comfort and convenience.
  - **Level 4** – Assigned to roads that provide a moderate degree of user comfort and convenience at moderate travel speeds.
  - **Level 3** – Assigned to roads open for and maintained for travel by a prudent driver in a standard passenger car.
  - **Level 2** – Assigned to roads open for use by high clearance vehicles.
  - **Level 1** – Assigned to roads that have been placed in storage (greater than 1 year) between intermittent uses. Basic custodial maintenance is performed. Road is closed to vehicular traffic.

Table 92 displays the miles of roads by operational maintenance level. Figure 33 displays the operational maintenance level by district.

**Table 92. Summary of KNF Roads by Operational Maintenance Level**

Operational Maintenance Level	Miles
Level 5	69
Level 4	125
Level 3	1,512
Level 2	1,931
Level 1	4,214
Not Assigned	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,863</b>

Source: Infra: Travel Routes 12/2012



**Figure 33. Operational Maintenance Level by District**

As a result of financial limitations and requirements to meet other resource objectives, the trend has been to progress toward fewer miles of NFS roads on the KNF. Over the last 15 to 20 years, the KNF has decommissioned approximately 980 miles of road.

The KNF has also been treating roads and putting them into what is termed “intermittent stored service.” These roads have been identified as needed (generally within the next 10 to 20 years) as part of the minimum transportation system and are treated to reduce the risk of undesirable resource impacts in the absence of routine maintenance while in stored (closed) status. Over the last 15 to 20 years the KNF has put about 283 miles of NFS roads into intermittent stored service.

Site-specific, project-level travel analyses conducted across the KNF are used to prioritize maintenance needs and identify opportunities for decommissioning roads or treating roads for intermittent stored service as the KNF works to identify the minimum number of routes needed for an efficient transportation system as directed in 36 CFR 212 subpart A.

### Trail Management Objectives

Trail management objectives (TMOs) document the intended purpose of an NFS trail based on management direction, including access objectives. Strategies defined in the Federal Trail Data Standards developed by the Forest Service, NPS, BLM and FWS include:

- **Managed Use** – Managed uses are the modes of travel that are actively managed and appropriate on a trail, based on its design and management. Managed Use indicates a management decision or intent to accommodate and/or encourage a specified type of trail use. Manage strategies used are: encourage, accept, and discourage.
- **Restricted Use** – Restricted uses are those where use is restricted by CFR or Forest Order. The most typical restriction is to motor vehicle use or over-snow motor vehicle use. Restrict strategies used are eliminate and prohibit. Where use is not restricted, it is allowed.

There can be more than one managed use per trail or trail segment and the managed use may only be a subset of the allowed uses on the trail. Not all trails where use is allowed are actively

managed for that use. For example, a trail may allow (no restrictions) mountain bike use, but not be maintained for mountain bike use, so mountain bike use is discouraged.

Table 93 displays the miles of trails on the KNF managed for various uses. There are a total of 1,812 miles of trail on the KNF. Managed uses are only indicated when there is a specific management need for the information. For example, the 43 miles of trail managed for cross-country skiing are the trails that are groomed, while all 1,812 miles of trails are open to cross-country skiing.

**Table 93. Miles of Managed and Allowed Use on the KNF<sup>1</sup>**

Type of Use	Use	Miles Activity Managed
Non-motorized	Hiker/Pedestrian	1,463
Non-motorized	Pack and Saddle	1,017
Non-motorized	Cross-country Ski	43
Mechanized	Bicycle	84
Motorized	Motor Vehicle/Motor Bike	144
Motorized	Motor Vehicle OHV <50 inches	38
Motorized	Over-snow	284 <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Total miles of managed/allowed use will not sum equal to miles of trail as there may be overlapping uses per trail or trail segment

<sup>2</sup> Includes roads with dual designations as snow trails

Source: Infra Travel Routes 5/2013 (Miles have been rounded)

Partners, volunteers, organizations, and other funding sources such as the State OHV and Recreation Trail Program are important to the KNF in managing trail uses.

### Travel Management

Travel management is one of the most controversial issues currently facing federal land managers. The Forest Service approaches access and travel management with the recognition that it affects every program and every person served. The overarching aim is to seek a balance of access opportunities on NFS lands while considering physical conditions, resource needs, user conflicts, and user safety. Providing a “fair” allocation between different forest users is a challenging task and the KNF recognizes it cannot equally meet the needs of all recreation groups.

Motorized recreation management on the KNF began in the 1960s, with U-Regulations in designated wilderness and recreation areas. Motor vehicle use restrictions were proposed in newly established Scenic Areas (Northwest Peaks and Ten Lakes) to “preserve the wilderness atmosphere and back up the management goals for these areas.” Trail conditions, existing uses, and potential for conflict were the rational used for the restrictions.

Federal off-road vehicle (ORV) policy was established by Executive Order (EO) 11644 in 1972, (and amended by EO 11989 in 1977) to “... ensure that the use of off-road vehicles on public lands will be controlled and directed so as to protect the resource of those lands, to promote the safety of all users of those lands and minimize conflicts among the various users of those lands.” In response to this EO and regulations from 36 CFR 295 (1973), the KNF published its first Travel Plan in February 1977, according to Supervisor Morden in a 1980 letter. This travel plan identified ‘National Forest land designated open’, ‘Area closed to all motorized vehicles’, and ‘area with restrictions or closures’, as well as designated roads open or with restrictions to motor

vehicle use. The Travel Plan index listed reasons for restrictions including: elk calving, winter game range, primitive recreation, and fragile soils. Subsequent travel plans were published forestwide in 1978 and a color map circa 1980-1983.

Use of motor vehicles regulations were updated in 1978 (36 CFR 295, 1978) to include publication of maps, monitoring effects of vehicle use off forest development roads, and moved prohibitions regarding use of vehicles to part 261. Forest supervisors in the Northern Region were delegated the responsibility to monitor the effect of off-road vehicle use, 1979 R1 Guidelines. Comments on a 1979 draft copy of the KNF off-road vehicles monitoring plan indicate little ORV use, and little resource or public safety concerns with ORV use at that time. In 1980, the KNF reexamined road closures and motorized restrictions with the public; looking at the basic purposes of the restriction, alternative ways to carry out the restrictions necessary, and ways to simplify the travel map.

In the Northern Region and on the KNF, road, trail, and off-road motorized vehicle planning was combined to produce travel plan maps for public information. Areas and routes where motorized use was restricted, and areas that were managed for motorized uses, were noted on the circa 1980-1983 KNF Travel/Recreation Guide. Reasons for restrictions included wildlife habitat protection, soil erosion hazard, and non-motorized recreation. In addition, site-specific areas and roads were mapped that were ‘open to motorized vehicles managed primarily for recreation’.

District specific access maps were published from 1984 through 2005. The access maps were updated as needed, not necessarily on a yearly basis. These maps stated that ‘Many of these road management decisions were developed in cooperation with the State of Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department, primarily to protect wildlife habitat and provide security. Use of roads is also restricted to protect soil and water quality, and provide non-motorized recreation opportunities’. These maps displayed route and area restriction by season and mode of use (all motorized vehicles, over-snow vehicles). In addition recreation sites, routes, and areas that were open year round to all use were displayed.

The 1987 EIS for the Forest Plan included rationale for road restriction to ‘minimize the cost of maintaining a road after a project has been completed, protect recreation value of an area, or protect wildlife values (1987 EIS, page II-86). Motorized restrictions proposed in the 1987 Forest Plan in recommended wilderness (MA8) were implemented by Forest Order. This included area restriction to all motorized uses in addition to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness and Scotchman Peaks recommended areas.

In 2001, the Off-Highway Vehicle Record of Decision and Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota, and Portions of South Dakota amended nine forest plans, including the 1987 Kootenai Forest Plan. This decision prohibited “wheeled” cross-country motor vehicle use on all NFS and BLM public lands in the three state areas except within 300 feet of roads and trails for access to a campsite. This decision provided direction to minimize resource damage and user-conflicts per the requirements of EO 11644 and the prohibition was implemented by Forest Order.

In 2006, district maps were published, which also had travel management information. These maps displayed motorized use route and area restrictions by season and mode of use (all motorized vehicles, over-snow vehicles). In addition recreation sites, snowmobile trails, routes, and areas that were open year round to all use were displayed.

In response to the roads and travel management regulations at 36 CFR 212, each district completed a Travel Analysis Report for trails and maintenance level 2 through 5 roads. The

analysis process included; describing the situation, identifying issues, assessing benefits, problems and concerns; and describing opportunities and setting priorities. The assessment of opportunities included benefit and concern criteria such as; known public desire for motorized access, user conflict, user safety, wildlife concerns, aquatic/watershed concerns, and spread of noxious weeds.

In 2009, the KNF published motor vehicle use maps (MVUMS) as required by 36 CFR 2012 Subpart B, designating the roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. Once the MVUMs were published, the use of motor vehicles (except over-snow vehicles) off designated NFS roads, trails, and areas was prohibited. Although the KNF continues to offer district access maps for recreation planning, the MVUMs are the legal order reflecting where motor vehicle use (except over-snow) is allowed.

Over-snow vehicle use continues to be governed by Forest Orders pursuant to 36 CFR 261.54, which includes area closures established in site-specific planning to protect wildlife habitat and non-motorized recreation. Generally, forest monitoring has not indicated a need for change regarding over-snow vehicle use on the KNF. Two exceptions would include the over-snow vehicle use in the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area, which is currently undergoing site-specific travel management planning, and the boundary area of the Scotchman Peaks recommended wilderness area near Savage Peak.

### *Road Access*

The current access status for NFS roads is summarized in table 94. The table displays the total miles of road, the miles designated yearlong, and the miles designated seasonally. The KNF currently has about 3,553 miles of NFS roads designated for either yearlong or seasonal motor vehicle use. These roads are available for use by highway legal vehicles that meet state legal requirements.

**Table 94. Summary of KNF Roads by Designated Uses**

<b>Total Miles of Road</b>	<b>Miles of Roads Designated Yearlong for Motorized Use</b>	<b>Miles of Roads Designated Seasonally for Motorized Use</b>	<b>Miles of Roads Open to Non-motorized and Mechanized Use</b>
7,863	2,832	721	7,858

Source – Infra: Travel Routes 5/2010

All roads (whether designated for motor vehicle use or not) on the KNF allow non-motorized and mechanized use. The only exception is road 401 in the Rainy Creek drainage which is closed to all traffic for health and safety reasons. The actual ability to use roads by non-motorized means may be limited due to vegetation. Many roads on the KNF have been in maintenance level 1 for many years and have re-vegetated to the point where even walking along the road prism is challenging.

### *Trails Access*

Table 95 displays the miles of trails on the KNF managed for various uses, and miles of trail open to those uses. The difference between managed and open miles is that the term ‘managed’ indicates a management decision or intent to accommodate and/or encourage a specific trail use. For example, the 43 miles of trail managed for cross-country skiing are the trails that are groomed for cross-country skiing, while all trails open (not restricted) cross-country skiing. Miles of trail where use is described as ‘open’ is used in the environmental effects section. Miles

of managed trail is dependent on budget constraints, maintenance schedules and partnerships, and may change year to year.

**Table 95. Summary of KNF Trails by Managed and Designated Uses**

Type of Use	Use	Miles Activity Managed	Miles Trail Designated Open to Use <sup>1</sup>
Non-motorized	Hiker/Pedestrian	1,463	1,812
Non-motorized	Pack and Saddle	1,017	1,809
Non-motorized	Cross-Country Ski	43	1,812
Mechanized	Bicycle/game cart	84	1,718
Motorized	Motor Vehicle/Motor Bike	144	144
Motorized	Motor Vehicle/OHV <50 inches	38	38
Motorized	Over-snow	284 <sup>2</sup>	971

<sup>1</sup> Motor vehicle use designated, or over-snow vehicle or mechanized use not restricted

<sup>2</sup> Groomed over-snow routes

All trails (whether designated for motor vehicle use or not) on the KNF allow non-motorized use, such as hikers. The actual ability to use trails by non-motorized means may be limited due to trail design, vegetation, or maintenance.

**Motor Vehicle Use Areas (36 CFR 212 Subpart B):** Cross-country motor vehicle use has been prohibited across most of the Forest since 2001 as a result of the 2001 Off-Highway Vehicle Plan Amendment for Montana, North Dakota, and portions of South Dakota Try-State OHV Decision (2001). Two areas on the Kootenai allow for cross-country motor vehicle use: the Douglas Hill off highway vehicle area (approximately 200 acres) and the Lake Koocanusa drawdown area (approximately 3,600 acres). Both of these areas are located on the Rexford Ranger District. Other than these two areas, motor vehicle use is only allowed on those roads and trails as designated on the Forest MVUMs.

**Over-snow Vehicle Use Area:** In winter (generally December 1 – April 30) with adequate snow cover, the Forest is generally open to over-snow cross-country use. Over-snow motor vehicle use cross-country use is allowed where it is not expressly prohibited with a legal order (36 CFR 261.50). The areas closed by Forest Order are the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness, the 1987 Forest Plan recommended wilderness areas, and several areas managed for non-motorized recreation and wildlife winter range protection. Of the 2,219,000 acres of the KNF, approximately 1,961,000 acres have no yearlong prohibition to cross-country over-snow vehicle use. However, not all of the areas available to over-snow vehicles are actually used. Vegetation, topography, access, and precipitation have a large influence on opportunities for this type of use.

**Mechanized Use:** Mechanized use is managed the same as over-snow vehicle use. Under the 1987 Forest Plan, mechanized use is allowed where it is not expressly prohibited with a legal order (36 CFR 261.50). Legal orders currently in effect prohibit mechanized use year-round on approximately 94 miles of NFS trails and approximately across 94,000 acres of NFS lands. The only area where mechanized use is prohibited is designated wilderness (e.g., Cabinet Mountains Wilderness).

### **Road Maintenance**

The objective of road maintenance is to provide for safe and efficient travel; access for administration, utilization and protection of NFS lands; and protection of the environment, adjacent resources, and public investment (FSM 7730.2).

FSH 7709.59 62.1 describes the scope of road maintenance to include any expenditure in the repair or upkeep of a road necessary to perpetuate the road and provide for its safe use. Work items may include surface rock replacement, seal coats and asphalt overlays, bridge replacement, slide removal, and other items that contribute to the preservation of the existing road. Road maintenance is not intended to substantially improve conditions above those originally constructed; however, there may be a need for adding to or modifying the original conditions without increasing the service provided. Typical examples of this include installing additional minor culverts and traffic control devices, implementing traffic management strategies, placing small quantities of spot surfacing, and re-vegetating cut and fill slopes.

Often road maintenance is completed to maintain drainage features and surface stabilization that have been installed to follow BMPs to minimize sediment production and other pollutants for the purpose of managing water quality consistent with the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) and state water quality programs. Forest Service policy requires the use of BMPs to control nonpoint source pollutions to meet applicable water quality standards and other CWA requirements at FSM 2532.

Road maintenance is accomplished by the Forest Service and in cooperation with other agencies and private landowners or contractors. In some cases, maintenance responsibilities are exchanged with other jurisdictions through maintenance agreements when such actions create efficiencies for both parties. Roads under road maintenance agreements with other agencies, local governments, or private organizations are maintained according to the terms of the agreement; however, this level of maintenance may not meet established agency-set standards. For cost-share roads, maintenance is commensurate with commercial uses of the road. Because jurisdiction of forest roads sometimes shifts to county or state agencies, road maintenance responsibilities are not static.

The Forest's ability to maintain the road system is dependent on a number of factors, including:

- Total miles of open roads;
- Allocated funding for road maintenance;
- Miles maintained through commercial activities such as timber sale contracts;
- Allocated funding for road projects to support other resources;
- Assigned operational maintenance levels;
- Resource protection needs; and
- Use levels and season of use.

Road maintenance budgets fluctuate from year to year. However, traffic volumes on the Forest open road system have risen. Commercial user contributions to road maintenance have declined. This affects both recurrent maintenance, such as seasonal blading, and deferred maintenance, such as long-term surface replacement. Depending on the amount and type of traffic, the expected life of an aggregate surface can be 10 to 25 years when adequate maintenance is performed. Currently there are about 1,400 miles of aggregate surfaced road on the KNF. Assuming an average life of 20 years, the Forest could be re-surfacing approximately 70 miles per year.

Funding has been well below that needed to annually maintain the entire road system at operational maintenance level standards. Annual accomplishment reports indicate that on average the KNF has been able to maintain, on an annual basis, approximately 20 percent of the open roads on the Forest (see table 96). As a result, roads are maintained on a priority basis. User safety, resource protection, and mission needs are used to prioritize roads for maintenance. Ongoing travel analysis continues to identify opportunities to treat roads for intermittent stored service or decommission unneeded roads to reduce the overall road maintenance burden.

**Table 96. Average Annual Road Maintenance Accomplished 2001 through 2012**

Miles of Open Roads in 2012 (Op. ML 2,3,4, &5)	Average Miles Receiving Maintenance Over 13-year Period	Average % of Open Roads Receiving Maintenance Over 13-Year Period
3,637	681	20%

Source – Road Accomplishment Reports from 2001-2013

Roads identified during travel analysis as needed for the long-term, but not needed in the short-term, are often placed in a level 1 maintenance category. This level usually involves physical closure of the road for a period of 1 year or longer and sometimes includes treatment for intermittent stored service (but not decommissioning). These roads are not open for motor vehicle use until needed again.

### Trail Maintenance

Although maintenance costs for trails are generally less than those for road systems, allocated trail maintenance funding generally falls short of what is needed to maintain the trails to standards (see table 97). Partners, volunteers, and organizations play a vital role in assisting with trail maintenance forestwide.

**Table 97. Average Annual Trail Maintenance Accomplished**

Miles of Trail	Miles Maintained to Standard	% Maintained to Standard
1,812	920	51%

Source – NRM Trail Accomplishment 2009-2012

### Recreation

The KNF finalized its Recreation Facility Analysis (RFA) Report in September of 2007 and developed a Recreation Niche Statement with public involvement. The niche serves as the vision for the Forest's recreation program and to ensure unique attributes are maintained for future generations. The following is the KNF recreation niche:

#### **Vast by Nature, Uncrowded by Design**

Bordering Canada and nestled in the mountainous terrain of NW Montana, the KNF holds impressive forests, wildlife and landscapes, including striking cliffs, spires, river canyons, and the magnificent peaks of the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness and the Whitefish Range. This vast uncrowded landscape has been the lifeblood for many people's for thousands of years and continues to foster a pioneer spirit passed down through generations.



These ties to the land and history are the foundation for interpretation and education for new and traditional visitors. Water, in all forms, has played a significant role in shaping recreation with reservoirs, rivers, waterfalls, glacial lakes, and snow providing a variety of year round day-use activities.

The RFA is a living, working road map to guide the Forest in providing a quality, sustainable recreation sites program. It describes the vision for the overall Forest recreation program and outlines proposals specific to individual developed recreation sites.

The process enables the Forest to focus limited resources on the highest priority sites and facilities. The results provided the Forest information to improve quality recreation opportunities and reduce deferred maintenance. The 2007 RFA satisfies the Chief's requirement (FSM ID 2310-2003-1) to complete facility master planning for recreation sites.

The proposals and guidance are the end result of the national Recreation Site Facility Master Planning process. Existing and projected visitor demands, recreation program niche, resource conditions, links to the community, program costs, and revenue were all considered in developing the RFA.

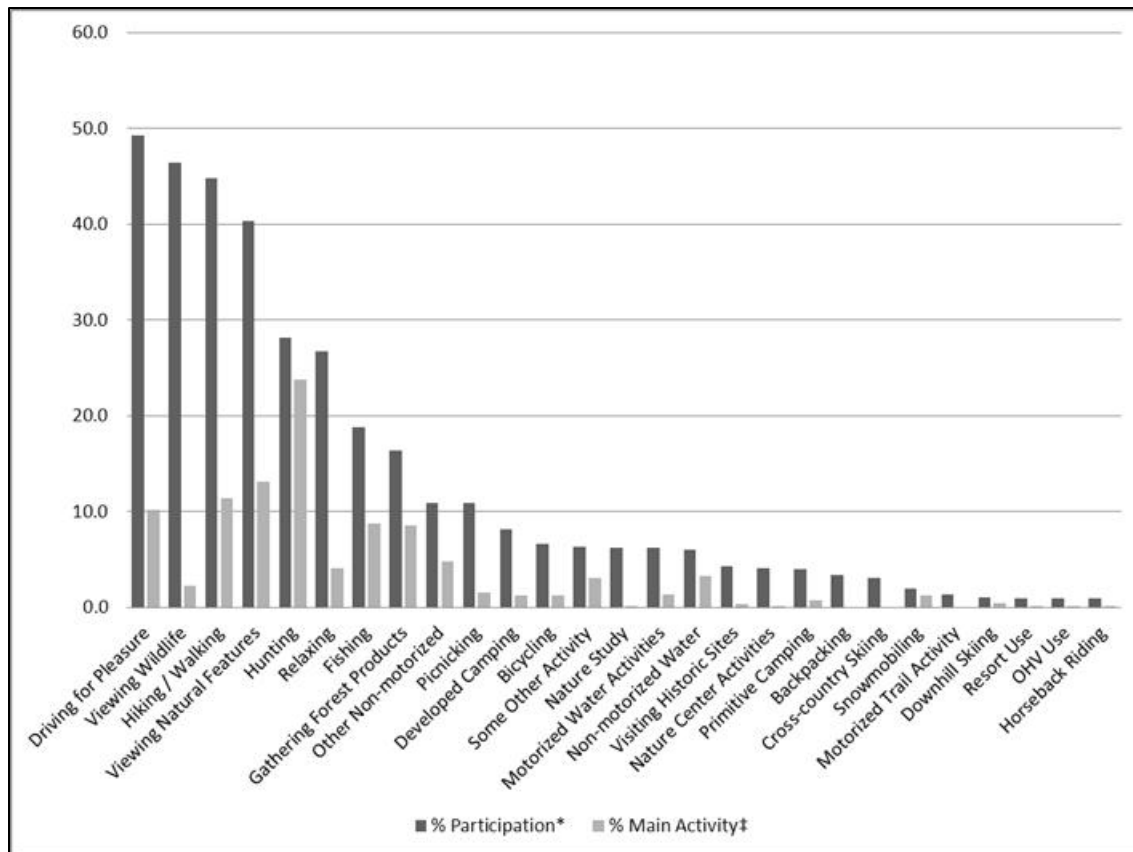
### **Visitor Use**

There are a variety of tools to collect information on the number and type of visitors to the Forest. This includes campground and cabin receipt records, partnership records (such as Snowmobile Clubs), campground host records, employee and public observations, and professional knowledge. These sources of information are typically at the site level, for example the number of vehicles parked at Stone Hill Climbing site on a given day.

The National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) program provides information about recreation visitors to NFS managed lands at the national, regional, and forest level. Information about the quantity and quality of recreation visits is required for national forest plans, Executive Order 12862 (Setting Customer Service Standards), and implementation of the National Recreation Agenda. While the NVUM provides use numbers and types of activities at the forest level, it does not provide site-specific information. The latest National Visitor Use Monitoring data is from 2007 (Round 2), as updated.

Visitation is estimated through a combination of traffic counts and surveys of exiting visitors, and provides a snapshot of estimated use. Visitation estimates for 2007 on the KNF is 892,000 national forest visits. Over 72 percent of these visits were from people who lived within 100 miles of the Forest. Those visitors indicated what their primary activity was as shown in figure 34.

The average visit to the KNF lasts about 9 hours; however, over half of the visits to this Forest last less than 5 hours. Approximately 25 percent of the visits involve recreating at more than one location on the Forest. Because of the local nature of the visiting population, frequent visitors are quite common. More than 38 percent of all visits are made by people who visit more than 50 times per year. Conversely, only about 25 percent of the visits are made by people who visit, at most, 5 times per year.



**Figure 34. Visitor Participation and Main Recreation Activity on the KNF (2007, NVUM)**

With increased use, recreationists are vying for quality recreation space, which may sometimes overlap in the same area at the same time. This can manifest itself in conflicts, such as between recreationists that use non-motorized and those that use motorized modes of travel. Recreation conflicts occur when a user participating in one recreation activity negatively impacts the recreation experience of another user. Overall satisfaction with KNF recreation management remains high as shown in table 98 from the 2007 National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey.

**Table 98. Percent Satisfaction Index<sup>1</sup> Scores from Recreation Users**

Items Rated	Satisfied Survey Respondents (%)		
	Developed Sites <sup>2</sup>	Undeveloped Areas (GFAs)	Wilderness
Developed Facilities (includes restroom cleanliness and facility condition)	78.2	71.1	58.9
Access (includes parking availability, parking lot condition, road condition and trail condition)	79.9	75.5	95.7
Services (includes availability of information, signage, employee helpfulness)	65.0	51.0	60.4
Perception of Safety	94.5	96.6	100.0

<sup>1</sup> This is a composite rating. It is the proportion of satisfaction ratings scored by visitors as satisfied or very satisfied

<sup>2</sup> This category includes both Day Use and Overnight Use Developed Sites

The future trend for both annual recreation maintenance and capital improvement funding is level to decreasing (Recreation Budget Trend 2013). Managing increasing visitors and more diverse visitors with level to smaller programs will continue to be a challenge. The Recreation Facility Analysis process is one tool to help align the Forest's recreation site infrastructure with current and future demands and budgets to meet future desired conditions.

### Recreation Settings

The Forest Service uses ROS to describe different recreation experiences using setting, activities, and experience. There are five ROS classes which apply to the KNF: primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, and rural.

In 1987, the Forest Plan did not quantify how many acres on the Forest were available in the different ROS classes. Instead, the various MAs were identified as being appropriate for a range of the ROS classes.

The current inventoried ROS is based on modeling of travel routes and terrain. Travel routes include KNF MVUMs for summer ROS classifications, and area closures to over-snow motor vehicle use and the winter-groomed snowmobile route system for winter ROS classifications. The *Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Inventory Mapping Protocol-December 2003* (USDA Forest Service 2003 December) was used for this analysis. Summer ROS is defined as May 1 through December 1, and winter ROS as December 2 through April 30.

ROS classes were mapped for summer and winter seasons to address the issue of motorized and non-motorized opportunities during these seasons. Big game hunting season is included in the summer season, although additional areas are closed to motor vehicle use during hunting season. The inventoried ROS summer and winter classifications are displayed in table 99.

**Table 99. Forestwide Inventoried Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Area**

ROS Class	Percent of Forest	
	Summer	Winter
Primitive	10	<1
Semi-Primitive Non-motorized	57	5
Semi-Primitive Motorized	10	87
Roaded Natural/Rural <sup>1</sup>	23	8

<sup>1</sup> Inventoried Rural ROS classes are more appropriately classified as Roaded Natural

The inventoried ROS shows the difference between summer, where cross-country motor vehicle use has been restricted forestwide since 2001; and winter, where cross-country over-snow vehicle is only restricted in areas closed to over-snow vehicle use. The winter ROS also differs from summer ROS in that the effects of snowmobiles being able to approach closed area boundaries was modeled. Acres of primitive ROS is lower in winter than summer because of this. Difficulty of access due to terrain and/or vegetation was not considered.

The ROS provides a framework for analyzing changes to recreation settings as a result of potential management activities under each alternative. The ROS can be used to estimate changes to recreation settings and opportunities resulting from potential development activities. The potential effects of possible management actions on recreation settings and experiences are represented in the estimated ROS inventory shifts under each alternative.

### Developed Recreation Sites

Generally, developed recreation sites have kept pace with changing demands and expectations. Developed recreation facilities include a variety of distinctly defined areas where facilities have been developed for concentrated public use, either by the Forest Service or private parties. Redesign and reconstruction of developed sites has been ongoing with primary changes focused on updating campgrounds for RV use, improving accessibility, and improving services such as potable water and sanitation. In some cases, expansions have occurred to increase capacity. Reservation systems, host programs, and fee programs have helped keep pace with the changing demands and expectations.

Developed recreation facilities have been constructed to offer recreation experiences, protect resources, or otherwise manage concentrations of visitor use. These facilities range from a complete campground with water systems, toilets, and fully developed sites; to a simple bulletin board or parking barrier at a parking lot. The KNF manages a wide array of developed recreation sites

The KNF currently has 72 publicly managed recreation sites (Development Scale 3 to 5); over 900 dispersed sites (Development Scale 0-2) and 53 privately managed recreation sites or opportunities, as shown in table 100 and 101. A developed site is designed and engineered to provide user comfort with some level of investment, such as toilets, tables, or fire rings. A dispersed site may have investments which are provided primarily to protect resources.

These numbers have changed little from what was in place when the Forest Plan was completed in 1987. Additional facilities include boat launches, target ranges, snowmobile shelters, and cabin rentals. The current capacity of publically developed recreation sites is just over 650,000 people during the managed season (typically Memorial Day through Labor Day).

**Table 100. Publically Developed Recreation Sites (Number and Capacity)**

Sites - Publicly Developed	Number of Sites	Capacity PAOT <sup>1</sup>	Capacity – Managed Season (PAOT <sup>1</sup> x days in season)
Boat Launch	17	1,000	168,800
Cabin and Lookout Rentals	11	57	11,200
Family Campgrounds	26	2,600	310,520
Group Sites or Picnic Areas	11	1,050	150,000
Swimming Areas	4	340	33,610
Trailhead/Observation Point	3	373	155,500
<b>Total Public Developed</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>5,420</b>	<b>689,680</b>

Source – Infra: Recreation Sites2013

<sup>1</sup> Persons At One Time (PAOT)

Capacity, measured by Persons At One Time (PAOT), is the number of people who can occupy a developed recreation site, and is the basis for design of the site. Occupancy rates have generally increased over time as more recreationists are using the same number of developed recreation sites. In addition, the distribution of recreation use across the Forest has changed from 1987 to 2012.

Use at campgrounds along rivers such as Bull River and Yaak River have increased by 6 to 7 percent. Use at destination lake campgrounds such as McGregor Lake and North Dickey Lake have increased by 25 to 26 percent. Use along Lake Koocanusa was high in the 1990s primarily

due to fishing. In recent years the fisheries has decreased and the level of the lake has not reached full pool, leaving some recreation sites without access to the water during part of the year, resulting in a decrease in use.

Use at developed sites on the north portion of Lake Koocanusa, such as Rexford Bench boat launch have increased, primarily due to Canadian visitors. Occupancy at several sites forestwide over the last 3 to 5 years has reached upwards of 60 percent including: Dorr Skeels (campground, boating, and swimming), North Dickey Lake (campground, boating, and swimming), North Shore (campground and boating), and Rexford Bench (campground and boating).

The KNF partners with between 50-60 groups each year to provide for recreation opportunities that would not otherwise be provided. In 2011 organizations, individuals, and groups donated over 33,000 volunteer hours, including campground hosts and trail work. The KNF has, and will continue, to partner with groups and organizations, work with volunteers, and look for other funding grants to provide recreation opportunities.

### **Dispersed Recreation**

Dispersed use accounts for over 85 percent of the use on the KNF (2007, NVUM). Dispersed recreation occurs on areas of the Forest outside of developed sites or general forest areas where recreation facilities, if present, are primarily for resource protection. Dispersed sites have little to no investment, with rustic or rudimentary improvements (barriers or signs) provided for resource protection. Visitors often seek these less-developed settings to get away from crowds and are an important component of the Forests recreation niche. More people, doing more things, over larger and more diverse areas, challenge the Forest's ability to effectively manage all the various uses.

In 2010 the KNF began inventory of dispersed sites (2009 R1 dispersed site inventory protocol). Approximately 900 dispersed sites have been inventoried. As of October, 2012 approximately 60 percent of the Forest has been inventoried. The current dispersed sites inventory includes: 14 campgrounds, 1 horse camp, 460 camping areas, 3 fishing sites, 161 day-use areas, 9 boating areas, 1 rock climbing areas, 3 observations sites, 9 snow parks, 158 trailheads, and 71 turnouts along the Lake Koocanusa Scenic Byway. Inventory of dispersed sites on the Forest is an ongoing effort.

As roads, trails, and areas are restricted or closed to motorized travel, motorized use shifts from these areas and results in increases on those roads, trails, and areas that remain open to motor vehicle use where a similar experience can be found. A sense of loss of freedom has occurred from the reduction of traditionally open roads available for motor vehicle access. For example; the goal to ensure threatened and endangered species security has required the Forest to adapt to evolving requirements, resulting in increases in motor vehicle access restrictions. These access restrictions have generated a strong reaction from forest users who are dissatisfied with the reduction in designated roads available for motor vehicle use.

### **Recreation Special Use Authorizations**

The national forests also offer recreation opportunities in partnership with commercial and non-commercial entities by granting special use authorizations or entering into partnership agreements. These partnerships help provide recreational opportunities on national forests that the Forest Service does not directly provide. Table 101 displays the current Recreation Special Uses permitted on the KNF.

**Table 101. Privately Developed Recreation Sites on the KNF**

<b>Privately Developed</b>	<b># of Permits or Agreements</b>
Groomed Cross-Country Ski/Shelter	1
Groomed Snowmobile Area/Shelter	4
Marina	2
Organization Camp	2
Outfitter and Guide	37
Park, Playground	2
Ski Area	1
Target Range	4
<b>Total Private Developed</b>	<b>53</b>
Recreation Events (vary from year to year)	4

Source: SUDS 2013

### Scenery/Landscape Management

As area populations increase, so does visitation to area national forests. Driving for pleasure and viewing scenery have become some of the most popular national forest activities from National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey data. Visitors expect a certain level of “naturalness” in the recreation and tourism settings they pursue. Even individuals who have never visited the KNF expect a certain level of “natural intactness” in these landscapes. This natural beauty contributes to their sense of well-being and quality of life. The Forest’s landscapes also serve as a backdrop to rural communities. The scenery contributes to community sense of place and quality of life for residences.

National forest visitors are attracted to a variety of areas for the natural character they possess. Visitors and residents value the forested backdrops that frame the surrounding communities. The transportation network and associated use areas provide visitors with scenic routes and vantage points to experience the region's vast expanse of rugged backcountry.

The KNF has a variety of landscape character types created by glaciers, rivers, continental uplifting, and mass wasting. The Forest contains many areas of outstanding scenic beauty unique to the Northern Rocky Mountain Region. The American public generally recognizes the scenic resources of NFS lands as valuable public assets that should be protected and managed for the enjoyment of future generations. Most landscapes on the KNF contain some degree of alteration from past human activities, including fire, mining, logging, and ranching, even though many of these changes are not readily visible to most forest visitors.

The most visible effects to scenery from past human activities have generally been caused by the removal of vegetation, creating patterns that contrast with the natural forms, lines, colors, and textures of the natural landscape. Forest vegetation management is generally done via timber sales or prescribed burning. Other activities that require alteration of landforms often result in more permanent changes to the landscape. Examples of these types of activities include: roads, trails, utilities, mines, reservoirs, communication sites, and gravel pits. Structures such as power lines, communication sites, buildings, fences, and other structures located on NFS lands also have potential to be noticeable and create negative visual changes.

National forest travel routes have been evaluated for the estimated level of public concern for alterations to the landscape. Travel routes classified as concern Level 1 (including those routes

that are designated state scenic highways or national forest scenic byways) indicate that the public is most concerned about alterations; concern Level 3 indicates the least concern. In evaluating landscape visibility, landscape managers have recognized that "distance" is one of the primary perceptual factors for determining whether alterations are visually noticed. Foreground distance zones reveal even the subtlest alterations; background distance zones are typically able to absorb greater alterations, provided color contrasts are minimized.

Landscape management is used to meet people's scenery expectations for the management of national forest landscapes. To ensure that scenic integrity is maintained, six levels of scenic integrity objectives have been established, derived from the landscape's attractiveness and the public's expectations or concerns. Each scenic integrity objective depicts a level of scenic integrity used to direct landscape management: very high (unaltered), high (appears unaltered), moderate (slightly altered), low (moderately altered), and very low (heavily altered).

Generally, landscapes that are most attractive (as classified by scenic attractiveness class) and are viewed from popular travel routes (as classified by concern level) are assigned higher scenic integrity objectives. The methodology for establishing scenic integrity objectives is provided in Agriculture Handbook 701. Below is the current inventory of acres and percentage of scenic integrity objectives (table 102).

**Table 102. Current Inventory of Scenic Integrity Objectives**

Scenic Integrity Objective	Acres	% of Forest
Very High	245,590	11
High	680,863	31
Moderate	1,032,187	47
Low	260,896	11
Very Low	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,219,536</b>	<b>100</b>

In some landscapes, human influence is evident through changes in vegetation patterns, landform alterations, or the introduction of structural elements. For the most part, national forest landscapes in the planning area remain natural-appearing in character, with many of the valued landscape attributes still intact. Most of the human-influenced alterations affecting landscape scenic integrity are where vegetation management activities have occurred.

## Environmental Consequences

### *Transportation System*

The 1987 Forest Plan and ROD anticipated an increase in the first decade in the total number of miles of NFS roads from 6,200 miles to about 8,600 miles, with an eventual total of 10,050 miles by the end of the second decade.

For all action alternatives new road construction (permanent or temporary) would be restricted in MA1a, 1b, 1c, MA2 (Eligible Wild Rivers), 3 (Botanical, Zoological, and Historic Special Areas), and 4. New road construction may be allowed after site-specific project planning under certain conditions in MA5a, 5b, and 5c. New road construction may be allowed after site-specific project planning in MA2 (Eligible Scenic, and Recreational Rivers), MA3 (Recreational, Geological, and Scenic Special Areas), MA6, and MA7. Forestwide direction in the various

resource sections would apply to road construction. For areas within inventoried roadless areas in Montana, new road construction would need to meet the requirements in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Areas within inventoried roadless areas in Idaho would need to meet the requirements of the Idaho Roadless Rule.

Only a minimal amount of new road construction is anticipated under the alternatives because of limited development and budgets. Under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D the total number of miles of NFS roads may decrease because these alternatives would include an objective to decommission or place into intermittent stored service 150 to 350 miles of road over the life of the Plan (FW-OBJ-AR-03).

Because MA allocations change by alternative, the areas where road construction may be allowed vary. Table 103 summarizes how the alternatives vary. Alternative D has the greatest percentage of the Forest allowing road construction while Alternative C has the least.

As described in the “Affected Environment” section, there are currently about 7,894 miles of NFS roads on the KNF. This is a result of road construction work over the last 100 years and road decommissioning work done over the last 15 to 20 years. Given the backlog of decommissioning work yet to be completed and that additional roads may be identified as not being needed, it is possible that the total number of miles of NFS roads will continue to be reduced as the Forest moves toward the road network needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of NFS lands.

**Table 103. Summary of Acres where Road Construction may be Allowed (by acres and percent of Forest)**

Alternative	Road Construction Allowed	Road Construction Allowed w/Conditions	Road Construction Not Allowed
A	1,652,400 acre (75%)	316,200 acre (14%)	251,500 acre (11%)
B Modified	1,467,500 acre (66%)	487,400 acre (22%)	264,300 acre (12%)
C	1,369,200 acre (62%)	477,900 acre (21%)	372,000 acre (17%)
D	1,745,000 acre (79%)	278,000 acre (12%)	196,100 acre (9%)

### Travel Management

**Motor Vehicle Use Designations (36 CFR 212 Subpart B) for Roads:** There are no proposed changes to current road motor vehicle designations (MVUM) under any alternative of the revised Forest Plan. Therefore, the number of miles of roads available for motor vehicle use will be the same for all alternatives (see table 90 above).

There are no proposed site-specific changes to current over-snow road vehicle designations under any alternative of the revised Forest Plan. Therefore, the number of miles of roads available for over-snow vehicle use will be the same for all alternatives.

**Motor Vehicle Use Designations (36 CFR 212 Subpart B) and Non-motorized Use Designations for Trails:** Allowed uses on trails will vary by alternative, based on MA allocation. For all action alternatives, mechanized and over-snow vehicle use will not be allowed within designated wilderness (MA1a), recommended wilderness (MA1b), or research natural areas (MA4). Trails inside designated wilderness (MA1a) are already closed to mechanized or motorized use. Areas and trails within, or accessing MA1b and MA4 will have a legal closure



issued in conjunction with the final ROD, closing the routes to over-snow motor vehicle and mechanical use where it is currently permitted (Trail ATM Codes 09 & 10).

Table 104 displays the miles of trail by type of use for each alternative. Alternative C, with the most MA1b recommended wilderness will close 343 miles of trail to mechanized uses, including mountain biking. Some of these trails are currently used by mountain bikers (e.g., Trail 26 Whitefish Divide), and loop ride opportunities will be lost. Alternative D reduces the miles of trail where mechanical use is allowed the least, with Alternative B Modified in the middle.

Alternative C, with the most MA1b recommended wilderness, will close 211 miles of trail to over-snow vehicles. Some of these trails may be used by over-snow vehicles and opportunities will be lost. Alternative D reduces the miles of trail where over-snow motor vehicle use is allowed the least, with Alternative B Modified in the middle.

Under Alternative C, there is one non-conforming use in MA1b recommended wilderness. Moose Creek Trail 877, within the Allen Mountain area, is currently designated as a motor cycle trail. If Alternative C were the selected alternative, the decision maker would need to address this non-conforming use.

**Table 104. Summary Miles of Trail by Type of Use by Alternative**

Type of Use	Use	Miles of Trail by Allowed Use on KNF			
		Alt. A	Alt. B Modified	Alt. C	Alt. D
Non-motorized	Hiker/Pedestrian	1,812	1,812	1,812	1,812
	Pack and Saddle	1,809	1,809	1,809	1,809
	Cross-Country Ski	1,812	1,812	1,812	1,812
Mechanized	Bicycle/Game Cart	1,718	1,575	1,375	1,659
Motorized	Motor Vehicle (Motorcycle/ORV)	144	144	144	144
	Over-snow	971	908	760	946

#### **Motor Vehicle Use Designations (36 CFR 212 Subpart B) for Cross-Country Use Areas:**

Currently, the KNF has designated cross-country motor vehicle use in two areas on the Forest (Douglas Hill and Koocanusa drawdown areas), totaling approximately 3,800 acres. On the rest of the Forest, motor vehicle use is only allowed on those roads and trails as designated on the forest MVUMs. The number of acres designated for cross-country motor vehicle use (3,800 acres) is the same for all alternatives since there are no proposed changes to the areas currently designated for that use.

When considering the number of acres where motor vehicle recreation opportunities exist, it is important to note that this refers only to those acres in MAs where roads or trails may be constructed and/or designated for such use. Current restrictions as shown in the MVUM remain in effect. Management areas where motor vehicle use may be allowed are MA2 (Eligible Scenic and Recreational Rivers), MA3 (Recreational, Geological, and Scenic Special Areas), MA5b, MA6, and MA7. As shown in table 105, Alternative C will result in the least amount of acres where motor vehicle use on roads and trails may be allowed. In comparison, Alternative D has about 302,300 additional acres where motor vehicle use on roads and trails may be allowed. This

is because there are fewer acres of recommended wilderness and more acres of MA5b in Alternative D than in Alternative C.

Alternatives A and B Modified are relatively the same in the number of acres where motor vehicle use on roads and trails may be allowed (approximately 240,000 acres difference between the two) and lie about midway between Alternatives C and D. Under all alternatives, no changes would be made to current motor vehicle access without site-specific project analysis and NEPA.

**Table 105. Summary of Acres Where Motor Vehicle Use (excluding over-snow) may be Allowed by Alternative (Acres and Percent of Forest)**

Alternative	Motor Vehicle Use May be Allowed
A	1,677,200 acres (76%)
B Modified	1,637,300 acres (74%)
C	1,490,400 acres (67%)
D	1,792,900 acres (81%)

**Over-snow Vehicle Cross-Country Use:** Under Alternative A, motorized use, including over-snow vehicles, is prohibited yearlong on approximately 258,000 acres. The areas where over-snow vehicle use is prohibited are designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, recreation, and other area closures for big game winter range.

For the action alternatives, over-snow vehicle use is not allowed in MA1a (designated wilderness), MA1b (recommended wilderness), and MA4 (RNAs). These areas will be closed to snowmobiling as part of the forest plan decision. Areas on the Forest that are currently closed to over-snow vehicle use for big game winter range (94,500 acres) will also remain closed. Under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D, there is a direct effect to the number of acres available for over-snow vehicle use based on the amount of recommended wilderness (MA1b) and research natural areas (MA4).

Areas allocated to recommended wilderness (MA1b) or research natural areas (MA4), that currently allow over-snow cross-country use, will have a legal order prohibiting over-snow vehicle use (as per 36 CFR 212.81, and 36 CFR 261.14) issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan. Areas that were recommended wilderness in the 1987 Forest Plan that are not allocated to MA1b in the revised Forest Plan (15,600 acres under Alternative B Modified), will be opened to over-snow vehicle use.

In addition, the action alternatives have desired conditions and guidelines for certain MAs for year-round non-motorized use. Management area 2 (Eligible Wild Rivers), MA3 (Botanical, Zoological, and Historic Special Areas), and MA5a have desired conditions for year-round non-motorized use. These acres reflect the desired conditions. The ROD issued for the revised Forest Plan will not close these areas to over-snow use. Site-specific winter travel management planning and subsequent NEPA is needed to meet these desired conditions.

Table 106 shows acres that would be open to over-snow cross-country use, based on the Forest Order that will be issued in conjunction with final ROD (under the “open” column header). This table also shows the number of acres where over-snow vehicle use is consistent with MA desired conditions (under the “Desired Condition” column header). As shown in table 106, Alternatives

B Modified and C would result in a reduction in the number of acres designated open to over-snow vehicle use from current. Alternative C would result in the greatest reduction (6 percent). Alternative D shows a slight increase (2 percent) in acres designated open to over-snow vehicle use from current conditions. When comparing desired conditions, Alternative C has the least and Alternative D the most acres where over-snow vehicle use is consistent with the desired condition.

**Table 106. Summary of Over-snow Vehicle and Mechanized Use Area by Alternative (Acres and Percent of Forest)**

Alternative	Over-snow Vehicle Use		Mechanized Use not Restricted
	Open <sup>1</sup>	Desired Condition <sup>2</sup>	
A	1,961,100 acre (88%)	N/A	2,125,400 acre (96%)
B Modified	1,920,500 acre (87%)	1,713,000 acre (77%)	2,012,900 acre (91%)
C	1,814,800 acre (82%)	1,500,700 acre (68%)	1,902,700 acre (86%)
D	1,988,500 acre (90%)	1,859,100 acre (84%)	2,082,200 acre (94%)

<sup>1</sup> Acres that will remain open to over-snow vehicle use based on order issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the Forest Plan

<sup>2</sup> Acres where the MA desired condition would allow over-snow vehicle use

**Mechanized Use:** Under the 1987 Plan and current Forest Orders, mechanized use is allowed everywhere on the KNF except for designated wilderness (Cabinet Mountains Wilderness). Under the action alternatives, mechanized use is prohibited in MA1a (designated wilderness) and MA1b (recommended wilderness). Acres allocated to MA1a remain constant for all alternatives.

As shown in table 106 above, Alternatives B Modified, C, and D would result in a reduction in the number of acres available for mechanized use. Alternative C would result in the greatest reduction (approximately 15 percent from current conditions), whereas Alternative D would result in the least reduction (approximately 2 percent from current).

There is a direct effect to the number of acres or trails available for motorized, mechanized and hand held motorized use based on the amount of MA1b and MA4. Areas that are allocated to recommended wilderness (MA1b) or RNAs except on designated routes (MA4), that use is not currently restricted, will have a legal order prohibiting mechanized use (as per 36 CFR 261.55(c)) issued in conjunction with the ROD for the revised Forest Plan.

**Hand-held Motorized Equipment:** Under the 1987 Plan and current Forest Orders, use of hand-held motorized equipment (e.g., chainsaws) is allowed everywhere on the KNF except for designated wilderness (Cabinet Mountains Wilderness). Under the action alternatives, use of motorized equipment is prohibited in MA1a (designated wilderness), MA1b (recommended wilderness), and MA1c (wilderness study area). Table 107 shows the acres by alternative where hand-held motorized equipment is not allowed. Alternative C has the most acres of recommended wilderness and would thus have the most acres with this prohibition. Alternative D has the least acres of recommended wilderness and would thus have the least acres with this prohibition. A legal order prohibiting motorized equipment, except for hand-held motorized equipment used for administrative purposes within recommended wilderness areas, will be issued in conjunction with the ROD for the revised Forest Plan.

**Table 107. Acres by Alternative Where Hand-held Motorized Equipment would be Prohibited**

	Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Acres where Hand-held Motorized Use is not Allowed <sup>1</sup>	127,800	230,500	342,600	163,900

<sup>1</sup> The use of hand-held equipment for administrative purposes is excluded

### Road and Trail Maintenance

Road and trail maintenance (both recurrent and deferred) will continue to occur. Physical conditions will continue to be addressed through maintenance activities and be based on public health and safety, resource protection, and mission priorities. Annual operating budgets and supplemental funding will likely fluctuate with the result that maintenance accomplishments will vary from year to year.

The condition (e.g., drivability) of roads may vary between alternatives. This is mainly a result of the variability of road maintenance work that might be accomplished under the four alternatives. Since Alternative C has the least amount of acres allocated to general forest (MA6), fewer road maintenance activities may be accomplished because commercial use and associated maintenance is expected to be less. Under Alternative D, which has the most acres allocated to general forest, more commercial use might be expected and may result in the greatest amount of road maintenance.

Routine road maintenance work (brushing, blading, ditch and culvert cleaning, etc.) is periodically performed on approximately 3,637 miles of maintenance level 2, 3, 4, and 5 roads and in most cases they are kept in a drivable condition for their designed use. The approximately 4,214 miles in maintenance level 1 (which includes roads treated for intermittent stored service), however, do not receive routine maintenance work. The drivability of these maintenance level 1 roads can be expected to continue to diminish as roads re-vegetate.

Trail maintenance would not vary by alternative. Annual maintenance is funded by Congress annually. Partnerships and volunteer work would continue to be important in maintaining trails.

### Recreation

The 1987 Forest Plan projected 314,000 acres of the inventoried roadless areas would remain roadless and would be managed for semi-primitive and primitive recreation opportunities. In addition, the 1987 Forest Plan stated another 126,000 acres of roadless areas allocated to other resource management goals would provide additional semi-primitive recreation opportunities until development activities occur. The demand for roadless recreation opportunities (including wilderness) was estimated to be 65,000 Recreation Visitor Days in the first decade (1987 Forest Plan).

### Developed Recreation

The 1987 Forest Plan stated that existing developed recreation facilities would be expanded if demand increased beyond the capacity of the existing facilities. In addition, it stated that with state, county, and local ski club cooperation, there would be an increase in the amount of groomed cross-country ski trails and snowmobile trails. No new facilities are proposed for construction, reconstruction, or decommissioning in any alternative of the revised Forest Plan. The revised Forest Plan does not propose to expand existing groomed routes for either cross-

country skiing or for snowmobile use. These activities would only be considered during site-specific planning at the project level.

Existing developed recreation facilities will be upgraded as funding becomes available; however, many of the existing facilities are outdated. For example, parking spurs in many of the KNF campgrounds are too short for modern recreational vehicles and trailers. Another example of outdated facilities includes doorways on some older toilets that are too narrow for wheelchairs. Unfortunately, any need for additional facilities is overshadowed by a shortfall in maintenance and rehabilitation funds for existing facilities and the high cost of construction around the Forest. As funds have become available, the trend has been to devote resources to upgrading the larger developed recreation sites that receive high levels of use. This trend is expected to continue.

Under Alternative A, all of the developed recreation sites listed in table 100 are managed under MA6 (Developed Recreation Sites) under the 1987 Forest Plan. MA6 encompasses approximately 3,570 acres. The 1987 Forest Plan stated that existing developed recreation facilities would be expanded if demand increases beyond the capacity of the existing facilities (page II-6). The 1987 Forest Plan provides sideboards for recreation, wildlife and fish, range, timber, soil/water/air, riparian, minerals/geology, lands, facilities, and fire within these areas (Plan, pages III-17 through III-19). In general, any activity in the developed recreation areas is done to enhance a natural appearing environment and provide opportunities for social interchange between users.

Other developed recreation sites in many of the other MAs in the 1987 Forest Plan would be managed under most of the same principles that guide MA6 under the revised Forest Plan.

Under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D, 10 of the current developed recreation sites would be managed under MA7 (Primary Recreation Areas). MA7 encompasses about 15,800 acres and includes lands associated with Lake Koocanusa and Turner Mountain Ski area. The desired condition in MA7 is to maintain and improve these recreation sites (MA7-DC-AR-01). MA7 also provides management direction regarding timber harvest, recreation management, road construction and maintenance, and scenery management within these areas. Any management activity in the developed recreation areas will be done to provide or improve a specific recreation experience.

Developed recreation sites outside of MA7 will continue to be managed for recreation use and improved where necessary and budgets allow. The desired condition across the Forest (FW-DC-AR-01) is to provide quality, well-maintained recreation facilities at key locations to accommodate concentrations of use, enhance the visitor's experience, and protect the natural resources of the area. Recreation rental cabins and lookouts provide safe, comfortable, overnight facilities that allow visitors to experience and learn about the rich history of the area.

### **Recreation Setting**

Management area allocations will affect recreation opportunities in each alternative. The quantity, quality, and distribution of recreation opportunities depend on the mix of ROS classes available. Alternative C reflects additional wilderness and non-motorized backcountry settings. Alternative D reflects more emphasis on development and active management. Alternative B Modified, the proposed action, falls between C and D.

The ROS acres for Alternative A in table 108 and 109 are current inventoried, or mapped, ROS condition. Mapped ROS acres are primarily determined by travel routes and terrain (specifically slope) The ROS model used the Forest's travel route inventory and digital elevation model to

delineate ROS zones. Alternative B Modified, C and D were calculated using changes in inventoried acres for MA ROS desired condition ranges. There is a direct effect to acres by ROS category by changes in MA by alternative. MAs which changed the inventoried ROS are primarily MA1b and MAs 5a, 5b, and 5c. The existing ROS as mapped (Alternative A) displays current opportunities as a result of policy, regulation, law, and site-specific analysis across the Forest.

**Table 108. Percentage Summer Recreation Opportunity Spectrum by Alternative**

Summer ROS Class	Percentage of KNF Forest Acreage by Alternative			
	A <sup>1</sup>	B Modified	C	D
Primitive	10%	8%	9%	8%
Semi-Primitive Non-motorized	57%	54%	56%	58%
Semi-Primitive Motorized	10%	16%	14%	12%
Roaded Natural/Rural	23%	22%	21%	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Inventoried acres

**Table 109. Percentage Winter Recreation Opportunity Spectrum by Alternative**

Winter ROS Class	Percentage of KNF Forest Acreage by Alternative			
	A <sup>1</sup>	B Modified	C	D
Primitive	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Semi-Primitive Non-motorized	5%	14%	24%	7%
Semi-Primitive Motorized	87%	78%	68%	85%
Roaded Natural/Rural	8%	8%	8%	8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Inventoried ROS

Visitor use is expected to continue to increase, regardless of alternative selected. Management actions can be taken to maintain a mix of ROS settings as described in the “Management Area Desired Condition” section of the revised Forest Plan. Management actions might include restrictions or limitation on use, such as seasonal or year-long closures or actions to encourage use, such as the development of trailhead parking or directional information or signing.

The ROS inventory is helpful in establishing baseline conditions for recreation settings. In this analysis it was used as a macro not micro management tool. ROS can be used to show the general effect of alternatives to recreation settings and opportunities over broad landscapes. While the desired condition is to provide for a range of recreation opportunities, we recognize that we will not be able to meet the demands of all recreation groups equally on the KNF.

As part of forest plan revision, the wilderness character of inventoried roadless areas is evaluated and some are recommended for new wilderness or additions to existing wilderness. In addition, the proposed alternatives describe desired conditions for areas where motor vehicle use may be considered (MA5a, b, and c). Management area allocations of inventoried roadless areas vary according to alternative themes.

The Forest's MVUMs display the current routes designated for motor vehicle use and there are no changes proposed under any alternative. Future site-specific travel management planning will consider additional motorized road or trail opportunities where motorized use is allowed within the MA direction.

### **Dispersed Recreation**

Effects to dispersed recreation are indirectly covered under the "Travel Management" section, described by the difference in acres available for designated motor vehicle use (tables 105 and 106). The number of miles of roads and trails available for motor vehicle use (excluding consideration over-snow vehicle use) is the same for the four alternatives since there are no proposed changes to the currently designated route system (see table 94 and 95). The number of acres designated for cross-country motor vehicle use (as shown on the MVUMS) is the same for the four alternatives since there are no proposed changes to the areas currently designated for that use.

The difference where MA allocation allows motor vehicle use (acres where roads or trails *may* exist and be designated for such use) affects where potential dispersed use could occur. Alternative D provides the most area (81 percent), followed by A (76 percent), B Modified (74 percent), and C with the least area (67 percent).

### **Recreation Special Uses**

In all alternatives, existing special uses would continue. Opportunities for additional recreation special uses may be affected by alternative selected. Some recreation special uses, such as outfitter/guide operations, could be affected by the amount of area managed for semi-primitive non-motorized and primitive settings. Additional recommended wilderness acres may increase the need for traditional outfitted activities due to limitations on access. Because Alternative C has the most semi-primitive non-motorized and primitive ROS acres, it may have the greatest potential for additional types of traditional outfitter/guide operations.

No new, special use authorizations are proposed in the revised Forest Plan so there are no changes to the Recreation Special Use program in any of the four alternatives.

### ***Scenery/Landscape Management***

The quality of the visitor experience may be affected by the condition of the forest environment encountered, depending on the number and types of manmade activities and the degree of deviation from the landscape's inherent natural condition that has taken place. Each alternative will affect landscape character to varying degrees over time based on the amount of change from the natural condition that is allowed.

Alternatives C and B Modified will enhance or protect the inherent naturalness of scenic landscapes on the highest number of acres. These alternatives are most likely to provide the greatest public benefits and develop the most appreciation from a scenic resources standpoint.

Scenery is an integral component of all national forest settings and must be considered in the analysis for all activities on NFS land. Each site-specific project must be analyzed in detail to determine compliance with forest plan direction and determine if mitigation measures are required.

Scenic integrity objectives have a range from very high to low. The scenic integrity objectives for each alternative (see table 110) are based on the theme of the alternative and the mix of MAs

in each alternative. Scenic class and existing scenic integrity level inventories were merged to create the composite scenery base map. Each MA has a range of proposed scenic integrity objectives as a guideline. These ranges are set to be compatible with the desired condition for the MA. The proposed scenic integrity objective categories vary by alternative based upon the allocation of the MAs.

**Table 110. Percentage of KNF by Scenic Integrity Objective Category**

Scenic Integrity Objective	Percentage of KNF Forest Acreage by Alternative <sup>1</sup>			
	A <sup>1</sup>	B Modified	C	D
Very High	11.0%	12.9%	17.5%	9.6%
High	31.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
High/Moderate		23.9%	23.9%	15.1%
Moderate	47.0%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%
Moderate/Low	11.0%	0% <sup>2</sup>	0% <sup>2</sup>	0% <sup>2</sup>
High to Low		62.4%	57.8%	74.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Alternative A (No-action – 1987 Forest Plan) does not have Scenic Integrity Objectives established using the Scenery Management System. When the 1987 Plan was completed, Scenery was described using the Visual Management System (USDA Forest Service 1977) with areas of the Forest classified using Visual Quality Objectives.

<sup>2</sup> Turner Mountain Ski Area (MA7) is the only area that has this scenic integrity objectives classification (Moderate/Low) and totals 852 acres.

### *Consequences to Access and Recreation from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Vegetation Management**

Commercial timber harvest activities will generally result in road reconstruction and continued application of BMPs on existing NFS roads. New road construction is likely to be limited and temporary road construction used as a more common method for short-term access needs.

Administrative use of gated roads that normally prohibit motor vehicle use yearlong is likely when management activities such as pre-commercial thinning, invasive weed treatments, or other non-commercial silvicultural treatments are planned.

Because general forest (MA6) allocations are lowest in Alternative C, it would generally be expected to result in the least amount of vegetation management activities and result in a lower amount of road use compared (respectively) to Alternatives B Modified, A, and D. Consequently, reduced traffic (i.e., number of vehicles on roads), both commercial and administrative, can be expected. Associated with reduced commercial use is the reduction of road reconstruction and BMPs work. Road maintenance activities done in conjunction with commercial use would also occur less often since this work is only required commensurate with use.

Timber harvest has the potential to affect recreation experiences and opportunities in several ways. Short-term effects may include increased noise and dust levels; the sight of landscapes altered by differing types of harvesting; the presence of slash piles, burned areas, and roads constructed for timber sales; conflicts with logging trucks on roads used by other drivers or by bicyclists; and the removal of snow for winter log hauling from roads frequented by snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, and snowshoers. Users may be temporarily displaced to



other locations because of log truck traffic, helicopter operations, and the noise from chainsaws. Visitors may experience prolonged displacement the longer a project or series of projects continue in the same vicinity.

Alternative D has the highest number of acres in MA6 where most of the timber harvest and other vegetation management activities will take place, followed by Alternatives A, B Modified, and C. Timber harvest and road building can create changes to the landscape, resulting in changes to ROS classifications. Alternative D has the greatest potential to convert semi-primitive settings to roaded natural settings. Alternatives A, B Modified, and C follow in descending order. Partial cutting could lessen the impacts to recreationists. Road development for timber management purposes in undeveloped areas has the potential to attract more visitors to the interior of the Forest where access previously has been limited. As use increases, visitors would experience less solitude and remoteness. Primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized settings could change to semi-primitive motorized and roaded natural settings. This change would occur only if the MVUM was changed in conjunction with vegetation management activities. Recreational benefits from vegetation management can include new roads and trails and the opportunity to gather firewood. In many cases, roads built for logging operations are then used by recreationists, although these roads typically are closed and/or decommissioned after completion of the timber harvest activity. Depending on resource objectives, some logging roads can be left open to create additional dispersed recreation opportunities.

#### **Effects from Wildlife Management**

Since wildlife management does not vary between the four alternatives, the possible consequences to access do not vary. All four alternatives include direction contained in the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (ROD 2007) (USDA Forest Service 2007 March) and the Motorized Access Management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones (USDA Forest Service 2011 November (FSEIS and ROD)). These previous decisions will be carried forward in all four alternatives and affect locations where motor vehicle use will be allowed and limit additional opportunities for over-snow vehicle use.

Forestwide wildlife management direction (i.e., FW-GDL-WL-01, 08, 09) can directly affect motorized recreation opportunities. Restrictions that limit types of access and seasonal closures during sensitive periods, such as mating, calving, and when animals emerge from dens, can temporarily displace recreationists to other areas. The KNFs MVUM limits motor vehicle use to designated routes yearlong or seasonally, often in response to wildlife needs. The revised Forest Plan does not propose any changes to existing yearlong or seasonal designations. Route and area designations, as displayed on the MVUMs, do not change by alternative.

Recreational benefits from wildlife management could include increased hunter and wildlife viewer satisfaction, as well as maintaining angler satisfaction. The effect on recreation from wildlife management is the same for all alternatives.

#### **Effects from Aquatic Management**

Watershed improvement activities are likely to continue. The consequences to motor vehicle access can be expected to be light. One common activity is treating roads to reduce sediment production and transport to surface waters or to provide for aquatic organism passage. Actions taken might be culvert removal, out-sloping of road prisms, or the removal of unstable fills. These types of treatments are generally done on roads that are not designated for motor vehicle use. Any roads receiving these types of treatments are generally no longer drivable. On occasion, these treatments may be completed on roads that are currently designated for motor vehicle use.

(Maintenance Level 2, 3, 4, and 5), but this is expected to occur infrequently. In some cases, roads receiving these types of treatments may be converted to trails which may allow other vehicle classes (e.g., OHVs, UTVs, or motorcycles).

Recreational benefits from aquatic management could include increased satisfaction by water recreation users as well as those utilizing lakes and streams for fishing. The effect on recreation from aquatic management is the same for all alternatives.

#### **Effects from Fire and Fuels Management**

Fuels management activities (e.g., prescribed burning) are likely to continue. Administrative use of gated roads that normally prohibit motor vehicle use yearlong is likely when these management activities occur.

Fire suppression actions are also likely to continue and could result in the use of gated roads as described above. In some cases, roads that are impassible to motor vehicle use (due to re-vegetation or other restrictive condition) may be opened in order to facilitate suppression actions. These roads would probably be used for the duration of the suppression efforts and post-fire work and then returned to their previous status.

Fuels management effects on recreation are similar to the effects described under vegetation management. An increase in fire extent, creating a more visible and long-lasting change to the setting, could cause a shift in recreation use. The degree of these effects is difficult to determine and based on the size and intensity of a wildfire event. Prescribed fire has some level of predictability for time, location, and intensity, which may decrease the short-term impacts on visitors. These effects are common to all alternatives.

#### ***Effects from Minerals and Energy Exploration, Development, and Reclamation***

The Forest Service does not initiate exploration or development of mineral or energy resources. Proposals for exploration and development are driven by external parties and market forces and regulated by existing mining law. Access and road development (long-term or temporary) is often associated with mineral exploration and development, but a site-specific analysis is required prior to any approval for exploration or development activities.

If any mine reclamation activities occur they would likely use existing roads. These may be roads that are not currently designated for motor vehicle use. They would probably be used for the duration of the reclamation work and then returned to their previous status.

Recreation could be affected by mineral exploration and extraction in all alternatives. Non-motorized settings could potentially change to motorized settings. Short-term effects may include noise and visual impacts from open-pit or underground mining operations. In the long-term, effects may include: development from a more naturally appearing landscape; new permanent underground or open pit mines and physical structures; and new roads and road corridors constructed for mining or drilling operations that may change the recreation setting.

The potential for oil and gas development on the KNF is low, with only a small portion of the Forest having a moderate potential for development. Well sites and other facilities would affect national forest visitors depending on the location of development and the setting affected.

## Cumulative Effects

### *Access*

Access across the Forest is likely to be influenced by a variety of factors. Given the mixed land ownership (state lands, corporate timberlands) in and around the KNF and the continuing management actions taken on these lands, there may be options for new access opportunities through cooperative and cost-share agreements.

A gradual rise in population is a general trend in the region and this often leads to increased use of forest roads and trails. The degree of change in traffic by the public will likely vary due to economic conditions (e.g., energy costs) and other demographics.

Commercial traffic (timber hauling) can be expected to fluctuate to some degree, relative to vegetation management activities. Market conditions and other external factors can often influence activity levels. These traffic conditions are usually limited to relatively small geographic areas and short periods of time. Hauling occurs more often during the summer months, but is not uncommon during the winter months as well.

If either the Rock Creek or Montanore mining proposals begin operations, it can be anticipated that commercial and operational traffic will increase (on both NFS roads and other county and state roads) due to facility construction and production operations. These traffic conditions would be localized in that the area influenced would be limited to the location of the mine facilities and the eventual terminal facilities for hauling operations.

Change in ownership of private lands can result in continued requests for road access across NFS lands. Depending on the circumstances, these may be requests for Forest or Private Road Special Use Authorization. Depending on the terms and conditions written into any new authorizations, opportunities for access to NFS lands may be created.

State and local government agencies with road management authority can be expected to continue to maintain their existing road network across the Forest. Some changes such as widening, resurfacing, and bridge replacements are probable but are dependent on budgets and funding allocations. The likelihood of jurisdiction of NFS roads being passed to other public road agencies is low.

### *Recreation*

The KNF has experienced many changes in recreation since the Forest was established, and even over the life of the 1987 Plan. Initially, recreation was light and concentrated in only a few popular areas. There were few campgrounds or other sites developed until the Civilian Conservation Corps era, when many developed sites and trails were constructed. Another major boom in recreation occurred after World War II through the early to mid-1960s, as post-war populations started heading to the national forests, demanding more and better recreation facilities.

Since the 1970s, interest in and appreciation of, the environment has increased national forest recreation visitation and has shifted activities and expectations. As temperatures increase during the summer and a majority of the Forest is free from snow cover, many people venture out onto the national forests for relief from the heat and to pursue traditional outdoor recreational opportunities.

Technical advancements in over-snow vehicles now allow the average visitor to travel many places where only skilled riders traveled as recently as 5 years ago. The development of the ATV has added a new motor vehicle use in the summer and allows many people to travel on routes into areas that they may not have been able to travel into previously. Lastly, the development of the mountain bike in the 1980s has added a summer, non-motorized use that was not considered when the 1987 Forest Plan was written.

All of these issues, along with several others, have led to more crowded recreation experiences during peak use times, increasing levels and range of demands on natural resources and resource managers, and more conflicts among the users themselves.

Continuing changes in equipment technology used for recreational purposes on the Forest will have impacts as new uses, or existing uses, and the manner of how and where people recreate. These changes in uses may alter the recreational experience in some areas. Those who pursue recreation opportunities, such as hiking or back-country skiing in remote settings, are likely to be more affected than other users.

All alternatives accommodate a mix of recreation opportunities providing today's recreationists with reasonable assurances of future motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities. Alternative D may provide slightly more recreation opportunities toward the developed end of the ROS classes by accelerating development of the Forest with a variety of management actions. Some values such as remoteness, solitude, and wildlife-related recreation opportunities may be reduced in Alternative D. Alternative C would propose the least amount of forest management, thereby emphasizing the primitive and semi-primitive classes of recreational opportunities.

## *Lands/Special Uses*

### Introduction

This section addresses landownership administration and adjustments and special uses of NFS lands on the KNF.

Management of landownership includes survey and marking of landlines and other boundaries, purchase and exchange of lands with private parties and non-federal government entities, handling of title claims and other assertions of title, and acquisition of rights-of-way.

Adjustments of land ownership can occur through congressionally mandated conveyances, exchanges, and acquisitions, or through Forest Service administrative activities.

The objectives of the Forest Service landownership adjustment program (FSM 5402) are to:

- Achieve the optimum landownership pattern to provide for the protection and management of resource uses to meet the needs of the nation now and in the future;
- Avoid land use conflicts with non-federal landowners by settling land claims equitably and promptly; and
- Provide resource administrators readily accessible and understandable title information affecting the status and use of lands and resources they administer.

Land occupancy and use by private parties and other government entities is managed through the issuance of special use authorizations. Authorized special uses on the KNF include industrial or commercial uses, private uses, and a variety of recreational uses.

All occupancy, use, or improvements on NFS lands that are not directly related to timber harvest, grazing, mining activities, and recreation are referred to as ‘non-recreation special uses.’ Typically, non-recreation special uses includes: roads, utilities, easements, storage facilities, and agricultural improvements. Recreation special uses include: resorts, ski areas, outfitter & guides, and a variety of uses that provide access to NFS lands by commercial ventures.

Use and occupancy of NFS lands may be authorized when such use is determined to be in the public interest.

### Legal and Administrative Framework

The following statutory authorities govern landownership adjustments and the issuance and administration of special use authorizations on NFS lands:

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (16 U.S.C. 477-482, 551):** This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to issue rules and regulations for the occupancy and use of the national forests. This is the basic authority for authorizing use of NFS lands for other than rights-of-way.
- **Transfer Act of February 1905 (33 Stat. 628):** This act transferred the Forest Reserves to the USDA.
- **Preservation of American Antiquities Act of June 8, 1906 (16 U.S.C. § 431 et seq.):** This act authorizes permits for archeological and paleontological exploration involving excavation, removal, and storage of objects of antiquity or permits necessary for

investigative work requiring site disturbance or sampling which results in the collection of such objects.

- **The Hellgate Treaty of 1855:** The Flathead, Kootenai, and Upper Pend d'Oreilles Indian Tribes reserved rights under the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 (July 16, 1855). These rights include the "right of taking fish at all usual and accustomed places, in common with citizens of the Territory, and of erecting temporary buildings for curing; together with the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries, and pasturing their horses and cattle upon open and unclaimed land." The federal government has trust responsibilities to Tribes under a government-to-government relationship to ensure that the Tribes reserved rights are protected. Consultation with the Tribes in early phases of project planning helps the Forest Service meet their trust responsibilities.
- **Occupancy Permits Act of March 4, 1915 (16 U.S.C. § 497 et seq.) as amended:** This act authorizes use and occupancy on national forest land for recreational purposes including resorts and recreation residences.
- **The Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended on November 16, 1973 (30 U.S.C. 185(1)):** This act authorizes the issuance of permits and easements for oil and gas pipelines. It requires annual payments in advance which represent fair market rental value and provides for reimbursement to the government for administrative and other costs incurred in monitoring, construction (including costs for preparing required environmental analysis and documentation), operation, maintenance, and termination of oil and gas pipelines.
- **General Exchange Act of March 20, 1922 (16 U.S.C. 485, 486):** This act authorized the Forest Service to consolidate its holdings in national forests where a large percentage of private lands were intermingled with forest lands. It made possible the exchange of inholdings within national forests for private lands of equal value and within the same state.
- **Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of July 22, 1937 as amended (7 U.S.C. 1010-1012):** Title III of this act directs and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to develop programs of land conservation and use to protect, improve, develop, and administer the land acquired and to construct structures thereon needed to adapt the land to beneficial use. Under the act, the USDA may issue leases, licenses, permits, term permits, or easements for most uses, except rights-of-way.
- **Section 7 of the Granger-Thye Act of April 24, 1950 (16 U.S.C. 490, 504, 504a, 555, 557, 571c, 572, 579a, 580c-5801, 581i-1):** This act authorizes special-use permits not to exceed 30 years duration for the use of structures or improvements under the administrative control of the Forest Service and for the use of land in connection therewith, without acreage limitation.
- **Independent Offices Appropriation Act of 1952, as amended (31 U.S.C. 9701):** This act provides authority for agency heads to charge fees for services or benefits provided by the agency that are fair and based on fair market value and cost to the Government. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular No. A-25 further defines this authority and requires agencies to establish user fees based on sound business management principles.
- **Permits for Public Buildings and Other Public Works Act of September 3, 1954 (68 Stat. 1146; 43 U.S.C. 931c, 931d):** This act authorizes permits, term permits, leases, or easements at the fair market value, not to exceed 30 years duration, to states, counties, cities, municipalities, or other public agencies without acreage limitation for the construction and operation of public buildings or other public works, exclusive of rights-of-way.
- **Highway Act of August 27, 1958 (23 U.S.C. 317), supplemented by the Act of October 15, 1966 (49 U.S.C. 1651):** This act authorizes the Federal Highway Administration to grant

easements to States for highways that are part of the federal-aid system or that are constructed under the provision of chapter 2 of the Highway Act. The Forest Service consents to the grant of these easements in a form agreed upon by the two agencies and upon the state highway agency's execution of stipulations. This is the only authority for granting rights-of-way for projects on the federal-aid system or projects constructed under the provisions of chapter 2 of the Highway Act (FSM 2731).

- **Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136):** This act establishes requirements for special use authorizations in designated wilderness areas for temporary structures, commercial public services and access to valid mining claims and non-federal lands. Under this act, Presidential approval is necessary for the establishment of new water facilities, power projects, and transmission lines. Except for the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of December 2, 1980, this act is the exclusive authority for rights-of-way occurring within designated wilderness areas.
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of September 3, 1964, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601-6a(c)):** Section 4(c) of this act authorizes permits for recreation, such as group activities, organized events, motorized recreational vehicle use, and other specialized recreation activities of limited duration.
- **National Forest Roads and Trails Act of October 13, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 532-38):** This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to grant temporary or permanent easements to landowners who join the Forest Service in providing a permanent road system that serves lands administered by the Forest Service and lands or resources of the landowner. It also authorizes the grant of easements to public road agencies for public roads that are not a part of the federal-aid system (FSM 2732).
- **Sisk Act of December 4, 1967, as amended (16 U.S.C. 484a):** This act authorizes the exchange of lands with states and local governments.
- **The Act of November 16, 1973 (30 U.S.C. 185):** This act, amending Section 28 of the 1920 Mineral Leasing Act, authorizes the Forest Service to issue authorizations for oil and gas pipelines and related facilities located wholly on NFS land. When the lands are under the jurisdiction of two or more federal agencies, authority for issuance is reserved to the USDI, BLM, subject to approval by the agencies involved.
- **Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1761-1771):** Title V of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to issue permits, leases, or easements to occupy, use, or traverse NFS lands. FLPMA directs the United States to receive fair market value unless otherwise provided for by statute and provides for reimbursement of administrative costs in addition to the collection of land use fees (43 U.S.C. 1764(g)).
  - a. Except in designated Wilderness Areas, Alaska, and specifically excepted situations, FLPMA is the only authority for all forms of use involving:
    - (1) Transportation, distribution, or storage of water;
    - (2) Transportation, distribution, or storage of liquids or gases other than water and other than oil, natural gas, synthetic liquid, or gas fuels, or their refined products;
    - (3) Transportation of solid materials and associated facilities for storing such materials;
    - (4) Generation, transmission, and distribution of electrical energy;
    - (5) Transmission or reception of electronic signals and other means of communication;

- (6) Transportation facilities outside of wilderness, except those rights issued in connection with commercial recreation facilities, authorized by the Federal Highway Act (FSM 2731), or the National Forest Road and Trail Act (FRTA) of October 13, 1964 (FSM 2732). The FLPMA is also used for granting rights-of-way to those otherwise qualified for FRTA easements, but who elect to pay a road-use fee at the time of commercial hauling instead of paying their share of road costs at the time the easement is issued. For further direction of FLPMA road rights-of-ways see FSM 2733; and
  - (7) Other transportation systems or facilities that are in the public interest, including those that would arise from future technological advances.
- b. Section 504g of Title V (Public Law 98-300) exempts facilities financed through the Rural Electrification Administration from federal land use fees. This section also provides for recovery of administrative costs from those uses.
- c. Section 501(b)(3) of Title V (Act of October 27, 1986; 100 Stat. 3047; commonly referred to as "Colorado Ditch Bill") expanded the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to:
  - (1) Issue free conditional easements for certain water conveyance systems crossing NFS lands;
  - (2) Authorize lump-sum payments for uses on NFS lands; and
  - (3) Administer uses on NFS lands authorized under previous acts that were granted or issued by the Secretary of the Interior.
- **American Indian Religious Freedom Act of August 11, 1978 (42 U.S.C. 1996):** This act states the policy of the United States to preserve and protect the rights of Native Americans to reasonable access and use NFS lands for exercising their traditional cultural religious beliefs and practices. This act does not grant authority to issue authorizations.
- **Archeological Resources Protection Act of October 31, 1979 (16 U.S.C. 470aa):** This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to issue permits for archeological research, investigations, studies, and excavations.
- **Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (16 U.S.C. 3210):**
  - a. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) provides numerous authorities related to access that are specific to national forests in Alaska (except for sec. 1323(a), which applies to all NFS lands; see the following paragraph b). The Regional Forester, Region 10, shall prepare Manual supplements providing necessary direction for Alaska.
  - b. The provisions of section 1323(a) (16 U.S.C. 3210) apply to all NFS lands. This section provides that, subject to terms and conditions established by the Secretary of Agriculture, the owners of non-federal land within the NFS shall be provided adequate access to their land. Regulations implementing section 1323(a) are set forth at Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 251, and Subpart D - Access to Non-federal Lands. See FSM 2701.3, paragraph 3, for the summary of the provisions of 36 CFR 251, Subpart D.
- **Small Tracts Act of January 12, 1983 (16 U.S.C. 521c-521i):** This act authorizes the sale, exchange, or interchange of certain parcels of minimal size.
- **Federal Timber Contract Payment Modification Act of 1984 (16 U.S.C. 618):** Section 3 of this act authorizes a waiver of all or part of a land use fee for an organizational camp operated by the Boy Scouts of America or other nonprofit organizations when they provide



services the authorized officer determines are a valuable benefit to the public or programs of the Secretary of Agriculture.

- **Ditch Bill Act of October 27, 1986 (P.L. 99-545):** This act amended FLPMA to authorize permanent easements for agricultural water systems.
- **Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 (16 U.S.C. 497c):** Section 701 of this act:
  - a. Establishes a system to calculate fees for ski area permits issued under the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986, (16 U.S.C. 497b);
  - b. Provides for holders of ski area permits issued under other authorities to elect this permit fee system (FSH 2709.11, sec. 38.03a);
  - c. Includes provisions concerning compliance with NEPA when issuing permits for existing ski areas (FSM 2721.61f and FSH 2709.11, sec. 41.61b); and
  - d. Withdraws leasable and locatable minerals, subject to valid existing rights (FSH 2709.11, sec. 41.61c).
- **Executive Order 13007, 1996 (Indian Sacred Sites):** Directs federal agencies to the extent practicable, accommodate access to and ceremonial use of, sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners while avoiding adversely affecting the sites and maintaining the confidentiality of the sites.
- **Executive Order 13175 of 2000, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments:** Provides direction for consultation with tribal governments for formulating or implementing policies that have tribal implications. Also provides direction regarding consultation and coordination with Indian Tribes relative to fee waivers. Calls upon agencies to use a flexible policy with tribes in cases where proposed waivers are consistent with applicable federal policy objectives. It directs agencies to grant waivers in areas where the agency has the discretion to do so, when a tribal government makes a request. When a request is denied, the agency must respond to the tribe in writing with the rationale for denial.
- **Act of May 26, 2000 (16 U.S.C. 406l-6d):** This act supplements the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture to regulate commercial filming and still photography on NFS lands. It also authorizes the Secretary to retain and spend land use fees collected for commercial filming and still photography without further appropriation, and provides for recovery of administrative and personnel costs in addition to the collection of the land use fee.
- **Cabin User Fee Fairness Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6201-6213) as set out in title VI of the appropriations act for the USDI and Related Agencies for Fiscal Year 2001 (Pub. L. 106-291):** This act establishes procedures for appraising recreation residence lots and determining fees for recreation residence lots located on NFS lands.
- **National Forest Organizational Camp Fee Improvement Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. § 6231 et seq.):** This act establishes a land use fee system for organizational camps located on NFS lands and authorizes the Secretary to retain and spend these fees without further appropriation. The act also exempts certain ministerial actions from the provisions of the NEPA.

### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

The following regulations provide direction for special uses management on NFS lands:

- **36 CFR 251** – Land Uses
  - Subpart A: Miscellaneous Land Uses
  - Subpart B: Special Uses
  - Subpart C: Appeal of Decisions Relating to Occupancy and Use of NFS Lands
  - Subpart D: Access to Non-Federal Lands
  - Subpart E: Revenue-producing Visitor Services in Alaska
- **36 CFR 254** – Landownership Adjustments
  - Subpart A: Land Exchanges
  - Subpart B: National Forest Townsites
  - Subpart C: Conveyance of Small Tracts

### Key Indicators

- Acres of NFS land administered; and
- Number of special use authorizations.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

The number of acres of NFS lands currently administered by the KNF and number of special use authorizations currently in effect would be compared to changes that would result from implementation of any of the alternatives considered.

The total acres of NFS lands are derived using a GIS measuring process. The total is comprised of lands under Forest Service jurisdiction both within and outside of the proclaimed NFS boundary. The total acres of non-NFS lands are provided by the Washington Office Lands group and are only those lands within the proclaimed NFS boundary. The data source for the number of special use authorizations is the national special uses data system.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

#### *Lands*

There are approximately 2,219,000 acres of NFS lands that are the administrative responsibility of the KNF. This is the result of the original congressionally designated lands and the conveyances (acquisitions, disposals, and exchanges) that have occurred to date.

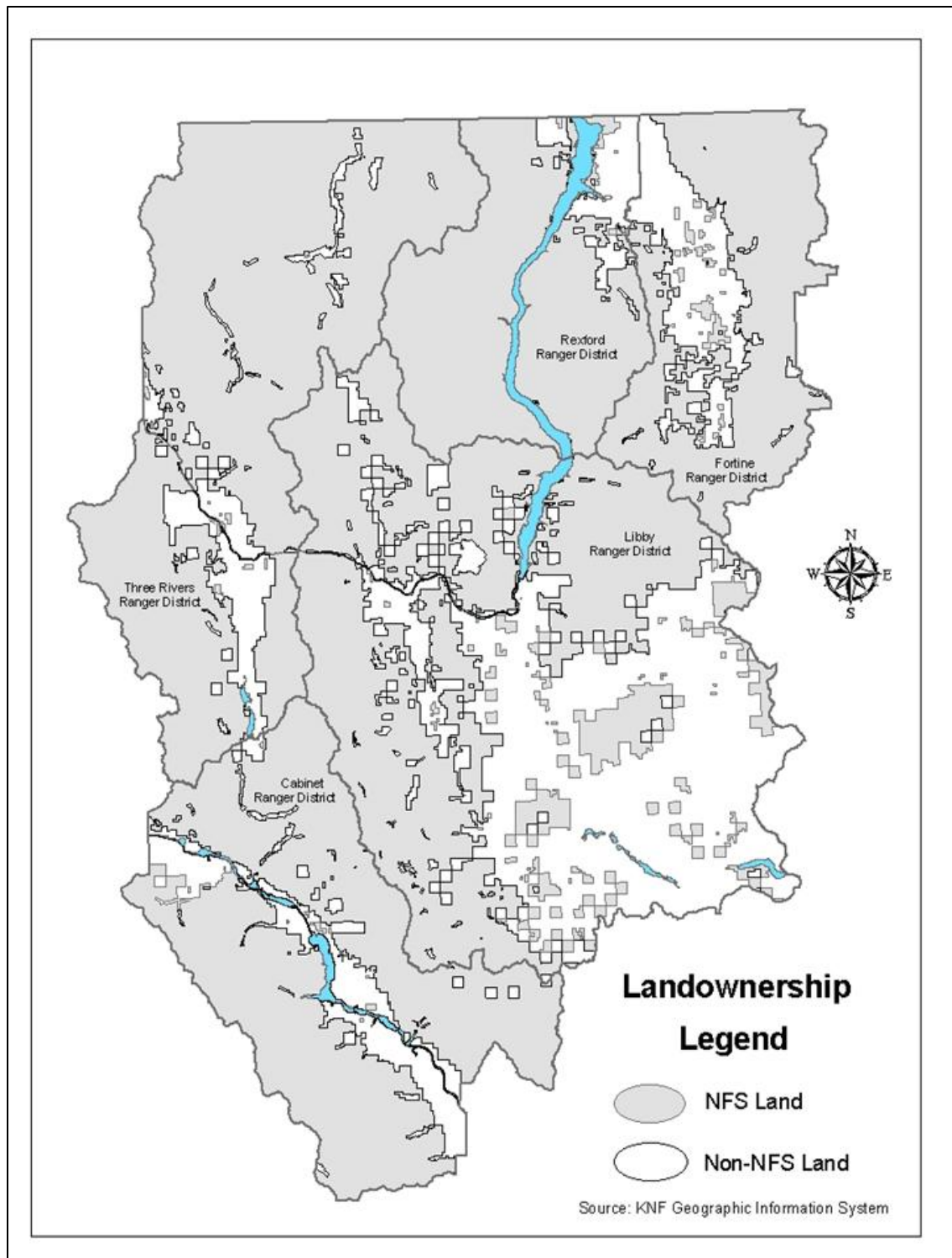
The KNF landownership pattern varies with location (see figure 35).

The pattern can be characterized as:

- Large blocks of uninterrupted, contiguous NFS lands;
- Checkerboard situations with alternate sections of private and NFS lands;
- Isolated tracts of private lands surrounded by NFS lands;
- Isolated tracts of NFS lands surrounded by private lands; and
- Large blocks owned by corporate landowners.

Within the proclaimed boundary of the KNF there are approximately 390,000 acres of non-NFS lands. These non-NFS lands are comprised of state and local government, other agency, corporate and private ownership; and large waterbodies.

The KNF has administrative responsibility for surveying and marking of approximately 2,500 miles of landline.



**Figure 35. Kootenai National Forest Landownership Pattern**

### *Special Uses*

Special use authorizations permit occupancy and use on NFS lands by federal, state, and local agencies, private industry, and individuals. Non-recreation special uses vary from low-intensity, often short-term actions such as filming or locations for scientific instruments, to larger

developed facilities such as roads, communication sites, dams, and utility/energy transmission infrastructure.

Currently there are 677 non-recreation special use authorizations in effect. Table 111 summarizes the current status with the categories and number of permits in each category.

Close to 70 percent of all authorizations are related to roads (DOT easements, FRTA easements, FLPMA easements and permits). The next closest category is for waterlines which account for about 10 percent of current authorizations. Outfitter and Guide authorizations account for about 5 percent and the remaining 15 percent is spread through all the other categories.

**Table 111. Summary of Non-recreation Special Use Authorizations**

Special Use Category	# of Permits
Airport or Airway Beacon	1
Airport, Heliport	2
Broadcast Translator/Low Power TV & FM	5
Building	3
Cable Television	1
Cellular	4
Cultivation	3
Dot Easement	28
Experimental and Demonstration	1
Facility Manager	3
Federal Land Policy & Mgmt Act Easement	30
Federal Land Policy & Mgmt Act Permit	107
Fiber Optical Cable	1
Forest Road and Trail Act Easement	331
Hydroelectric Project, FERC Exempted	1
Hydroelectric Project, FERC Licensed	1
Irrigation Water Ditch	5
Irrigation Water Trans Pipeline < 12" D	17
Liquid Waste Disposal Area	1
Livestock Area	2
Microwave-Common Carrier	5
Microwave-Industrial	1
Motion Picture and TV Location	1
Nondisturbing Use	2
Passive Reflector	4
Powerline	6
Powerline, REA Financed	4
Private Mobile Radio Service	9
Railroads Right-of-Way	2
Residence, Privately-Owned Building	1
Resource Monitoring Site	4

Special Use Category	# of Permits
Service Building	2
Sign	1
Slurry Pipeline	1
Stockpile Site	1
Stream Gauging Station	2
Telephone and Telegraph Line	2
Telephone Line, REA Financed	2
Transfer Station	3
Warehouse and Storage Yard	1
Water Conveyance Easement, PL 99-545	3
Water Quality Monitoring Station	1
Water Trans Pipeline < 12" D	70
Water Trans Pipeline >=12" D	1
Weather Station	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>677</b>

Source: INFRA: Special Uses Data System (SUDS) 1/2010

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

#### **Alternative A — No-action Alternative**

This alternative reflects the 1987 Forest Plan, as amended to date, and accounts for current laws and regulations that have been issued since the original Forest Plan and the amendments were adopted. The 1987 Forest Plan recognized the desirability of adjusting landownership in order to improve manageability of NFS lands. This alternative does not propose to acquire or dispose of any lands but did identify (in appendix 9 of the 1987 Forest Plan) lands that were desirable to be acquired and lands that were available for disposal.

#### **Alternatives B Modified, C, and D**

None of the alternatives propose to make any site-specific changes to the existing landownership on the KNF. No conveyances (acquisitions, disposals, or exchanges) are proposed. Any of these actions would only be considered at the project level. Until an external entity presents a proposal there would be no changes to the existing landownership pattern.

Since no changes in landownership are proposed, the number of acres of NFS lands remains the same for all four alternatives.

None of the alternatives propose to make any site-specific changes to existing special use authorizations or rights-of-way on the KNF.

Since no changes in special use authorizations or in rights-of-way are proposed, there is no difference between Alternatives A, B Modified, C, or D.

### *Consequences to Lands and Special Uses from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Management Area Prescriptions**

Some MA allocations, such as NFS lands which have not been statutorily designated for a specific use (e.g., MA1b – Recommended Wilderness, MA2 – Eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers) or lands that have been administratively designated for a specific use (e.g., MA3 – Special Areas, MA4 – Research Natural Areas) are less likely to be considered for disposal or exchange. Based on MA allocations, Alternative C would have the greatest number of acres that would be less likely to be considered for disposal or exchange, followed by Alternative B Modified, D, and A.

Similar to lands, some special uses authorizations are less likely to be considered in MA1b, MA2, MA3, or MA4. Based on MA allocations, Alternative C would have the greatest number of acres that would be less likely to be considered for special use authorizations, followed by Alternative B Modified, D, and A.

#### **Effects from Vegetation Management**

Vegetation treatments tend to impact the appraised value of NFS lands. Depending on the type of treatment the value may decrease or increase. Since Alternative D has the most likelihood of vegetation treatments it is most likely to result in fluctuations in land values, followed by Alternative A, B Modified, and C.

#### **Effects from Wildlife Management**

National Forest System lands that provide secure habitat or contribute as linkage areas are less likely to be considered for disposal or exchange. The impact is the same for the four alternatives since the lands where these conditions exist does not vary between the alternatives.

#### **Effects from Recreation Management**

National Forest System lands with developed recreation sites (e.g., campgrounds) are less likely to be considered for disposal or exchange.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects evaluate the potential impacts to NFS lands and special uses from the proposed action when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The lands within the KNF boundary form the geographic scope for cumulative effects since this is the scope for the proposed action (Alternative B Modified). The temporal bound would be the life of the Forest Plan which is estimated to be a 15 year time span.

In order to integrate the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives, existing conditions are used as a proxy for the impacts of past actions. This is because existing conditions reflect the collective impact of all prior actions that have affected landownership and special uses and might contribute to cumulative effects.

If either the Rock Creek or Monantore mining proposals begin operations, it can be anticipated that authorizations would be granted for electric transmission lines. These would be localized in that the area influenced would be limited to the location of the mine facilities and existing power line source points. As part of probable mitigation measures for wetlands it can also be expected that additional lands would be conveyed as NFS lands resulting in a slight increase of the number of acres administered by the KNF.

Landownership and special uses can be expected to be influenced by a variety of factors.

As described in the “Affected Environment” section, the KNF has administrative responsibilities for 2,219,000 acres of NFS lands. At this time the KNF is not actively pursuing any adjustments in landownership. But, in recent years, external entities have made land acquisitions and have transferred ownership to the national forests; and there is some likelihood that these types of actions may continue. Any change (increase or decrease in total NFS lands) is dependent on what actions might be initiated. Outright purchase and transfer would most likely result in an increase in the acres of NFS lands. Land exchanges, on the other hand, may result in a decrease in the acres of NFS lands.

The Forest can expect requests for special use authorizations to continue. As more private land is subdivided there is usually an associated increase in requests for road special use permits and utility easements. Requests for modification of existing authorized communication sites and designation of new communication sites can reasonably be expected as technological advances (e.g., cell phones) are made. On the KNF these sites typically occupy small acreages (1 to 2 acres).

Boundary survey and marking will continue and occasional encroachments are likely to be discovered.



## *Inventoried Roadless Areas*

### Introduction

Inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) are undeveloped areas typically exceeding 5,000 acres that meet the minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act. Roadless area inventories have been completed during the Roadless Area Resource Evaluations of 1972 (RARE I), 1979 (RARE II) 1987 KNF Plan EIS, appendix C, and 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

For NFS lands in Montana, current IRAs are those areas mapped under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B). These areas are identified in appendix C of the FEIS for the revised Forest Plan. The official set of maps is maintained at the national headquarters office of the Forest Service. An IRA map layer is also retained in the KNF GIS library.

For NFS lands in Idaho, IRAs are those areas designated as Idaho Roadless Areas pursuant to 36 CFR §294.21 and 36 CFR §294.29. These areas are identified in a set of maps maintained at the national headquarters office of the Forest Service.

Inventoried roadless areas are distributed across the Forest comprising approximately 638,000 acres of undeveloped area. These areas provide a range of primitive and semi-primitive recreation opportunities. Roadless area recreation levels vary from low to moderate, depending upon their location. Use levels tend to be lower than the developed portions of the Forest where roads allow easier access to developed and dispersed recreational opportunities. The roadless areas provide a myriad of other resource benefits including undeveloped fisheries and wildlife habitat, biological diversity, and sources for high-quality water.

Public opinions regarding the use of these areas vary greatly; and future management of roadless areas is a controversial and polarized issue. Management direction for IRAs has been proposed in the revised Forest Plan and for each alternative. IRAs within the state of Idaho (approximately 35,100 acres) are managed under the Idaho Roadless Rule of 2008 (36 CFR 294 subpart C). While a management allocation may allow development activities such as vegetation management in a roadless area, it does not require it. Such activities may be proposed, but must be further evaluated in site-specific NEPA prior to approval and implementation.

Each roadless area is evaluated through the forest planning process to determine if it provides wilderness characteristics and whether or not it should be recommended for wilderness. This analysis is included as appendix C – Wilderness Evaluation. This analysis evaluates the effects of the revised Forest Plan and alternatives on roadless characteristics. This evaluation considered the criteria and process for evaluating potential wilderness found in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 70, Wilderness Evaluation.

Areas not recommended for wilderness could still be considered for wilderness by Congress. Impacts on the areas' inherent wilderness character (undeveloped nature, naturalness, opportunity to provide primitive and unconfined recreation, and natural ecosystem) could detract from future consideration of the area as wilderness.

## Legal and Administrative Framework

### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **The Wilderness Act of September 9, 1964 (P.L. 88-577):** Defines wilderness and sets forth policy and implications for wilderness designation.
- **Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977:** “provides for the study of certain lands to determine their suitability for designation as wilderness in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964”, and for other purposes.

### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

- **36 CFR 219.27(b):** Special Designations - (b) Wilderness Area Reviews states: ‘Unless federal statute directs otherwise, all undeveloped areas that are of sufficient size as to make practicable their preservation and use in an unimpaired condition must be evaluated for recommended wilderness designation during the Plan revision process. These areas may be evaluated at other times as determined by the responsible official.’
- **Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C):** Provides state-specific direction for the conservation of inventoried roadless areas in the national forest within the state of Idaho.
- **2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart B):** The 2001 Roadless Rule establishes prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting on inventoried roadless areas on NFS lands. The intent of the 2001 Roadless Rule is to provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas within the NFS in the context of multiple-use management. IRAs are identified in the set of inventoried roadless area maps contained in the Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation, Final Environmental Impact Statement Volume 2 dated November 2000 and in appendix C of the Forest Plan FEIS.

### Key Indicator

- Number of acres recommended for wilderness, by alternative.

## Methodology and Analysis Process

### *Inventory of Roadless Areas for Forest Plan Revision*

When revising forest plans, national forests are required to evaluate roadless areas, consider their wilderness characteristics, and to make recommendations to Congress regarding areas suitable for inclusion into the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Forest Service can only recommend wilderness allocations to Congress via Forest Plans. Only Congress can designate wilderness through the legislative process. The first step in the evaluation of potential wilderness is to identify and inventory all roadless areas within NFS lands that satisfy the definition of wilderness found in section 2(c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act.

Criteria for determining whether an area of NFS land qualifies as an IRA are provided in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 (71.1), which states: “Areas qualify for placement on the potential wilderness inventory if they meet the statutory definition of wilderness. Include areas that meet either criteria 1 and 3, or criteria 2 and 3 below.” In addition, they may have improvements if they meet the criteria in section 71.11, and for areas east of the 100 meridian, they must also meet the criteria in 71.12.

1. Areas contain 5,000 acres or more.

2. Areas contain less than 5,000 acres, but can meet one or more of the following criteria:

- a) Areas can be preserved due to physical terrain and natural conditions;
- b) Areas are self-contained ecosystems, such as an island, that can be effectively managed as a separate unit of the National Wilderness Preservation System; or
- c) Areas are contiguous to existing wilderness, primitive areas, Administration-endorsed wilderness, or potential wilderness in other federal ownership, regardless of their size.

3. Areas do not contain forest roads (36 CFR 212.1) or other permanently authorized roads, except as permitted in areas east of the 100th meridian."

Inventoried roadless areas may contain improvements such as motorized trails, unauthorized and user-created roads, fences, outfitter camps, and evidence of historic logging activities. The identification of potential wilderness inventory does not constitute a land designation, nor does it imply any particular level of management direction or protection. It is completed with the express purpose of identifying all lands that meet the criteria for being evaluated for wilderness suitability and possible recommendation for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### *Evaluation for Wilderness Potential*

The next step in potential wilderness evaluation is to determine the mix of land and resources uses that best meet public needs. An area recommended as suitable for wilderness must meet the test of capability, availability, and need. In addition to the inherent wilderness quality it possesses, an area must provide opportunities and experiences that are dependent upon and enhanced by a wilderness environment, and the ability of the area to be managed as wilderness.

The IRAs were evaluated for suitability for potential wilderness with the test of capability, availability, and need as follows:

- **Capability** – The capability of a potential wilderness is the degree to which that area contains the basic characteristics that make it suitable for wilderness recommendation without regard to its availability for or need as wilderness. This includes environmental as well as manageability considerations.
- **Availability** – All NFS lands determined to meet wilderness capability requirements are considered potentially available for wilderness designation. However, the determination of availability is conditioned by the value of and need for the wilderness resource compared to the value of and need for other resources.
- **Need** – The need for an area to be designated as wilderness is determined through an analysis of the degree to which it contributes to the overall National Wilderness Preservation System. This evaluation is conducted at the regional level considering factors such as geographic distribution of areas and representations of landforms and ecosystems.

Each of the forty-three areas of potential wilderness inventory was evaluated to determine suitability as recommended wilderness between 2003 and 2005 for the revised Forest Plan. These inventories were reviewed again in 2012 based on comments received on the DEIS. Updated information used to review the evaluations includes: comments from the draft Forest Plan and DEIS, underrepresented plan communities maps, sensitive plant occurrences (Montana

Natural Heritage Program 2012), and TE&S wildlife species presence. The IRAs were first assessed for capability and availability. The regional need analysis was then applied.

The Wilderness Needs Assessment was completed in 2003 for the USDA Forest Service Northern Region. Need is described as the degree to which an area contributes to the local and national distribution of wilderness (FSH 1909.12, 72.3a). The Northern Region assessment included social and ecological factors.

The Regional Needs Assessment found that designation of additional wilderness acreage in the region could provide a greater level of habitat security for additional plant species that are rare at the global or state level according to the state Natural Heritage Programs. The KNF is included in the Flathead Valley Ecological section of the Northern Region. This ecological section would gain acreage of under-represented cover types with the addition of IRAs into the wilderness system (USDA Forest Service 2003).

The four under-represented types on the KNF are vegetation response units 2 (ponderosa pine), 5 (western redcedar and western hemlock), 8 (western redcedar and western hemlock –wet), and Aquatic Response Unit types representing forest-dominated riparian areas.

### Changes between Draft and Final

The 2001 Roadless Rule was the subject of litigation in multiple jurisdictions. Ultimately, the rule was judicially upheld (2012) and it is in effect, with the exceptions of the states of Idaho and Colorado where separate rules apply. See *Wyoming v. U.S.D.A.*, 661 F.3d 1209 (10th Cir. 2011) (upholding 2001 Roadless Rule); *Kootenai Tribe of Idaho v. Veneman*, 313 F.3d 1094 (9th Cir. 2002) (reinstating Roadless Rule); *Jayne v. Sherman*, No. 11-35269 (9th Cir. Jan. 7, 2013). The 2001 Roadless Rule will be implemented on Kootenai National Forest Inventoried Roadless Areas (36 CFR 294 Subpart B).

Memorandum 1042-156 expired May 30, 2012 and was removed: Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack reserved decision authority for projects in inventoried roadless areas. However, the Chief continues to reserve decision authority for certain types of projects (1920, May 31, 2012).

Wilderness evaluation ratings were reviewed and updated as needed for capability, availability, and need (appendix C). While individual element ratings did change, no suitability rating for recommended wilderness was changed between the DEIS and FEIS. Summary sheets by IRA have been added to appendix C.

Definitions, minor edits, and clarifications have been made throughout the section.

Changes in recommended wilderness for the Whitefish Divide area were made in response to public comment. These changes included removing areas above the town of Eureka and Williams Creek from recommended wilderness from DEIS to FEIS in Alternative B Modified due to concerns with management needs in the WUI and public water supply areas.

A section was added under effects to access and recreation to address the site-specific decisions to be made in recommended wilderness area: area and trail closure to motorized vehicle, mechanized uses, and motorized equipment and removing motorized restrictions on areas that are no longer recommended.

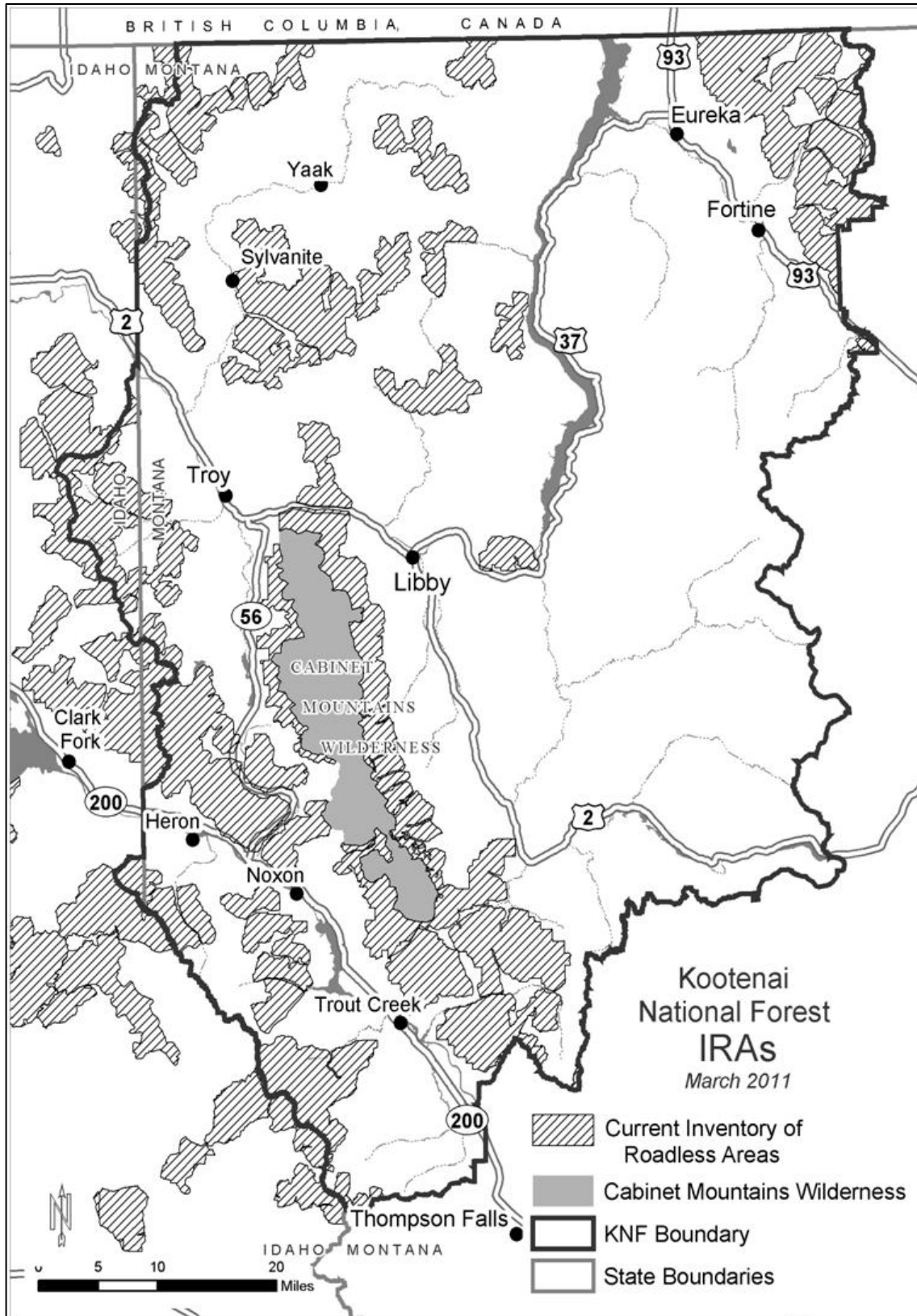


Figure 36. Potential Wilderness Inventory Map

## Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

### *Inventory of Roadless Areas*

The 1987 Plan identified 32 IRAs with a total of 403,300 acres. A review of the 32 IRAs and other unroaded areas was updated as part of the initial Forest Plan revision efforts in 1999. The purpose of the 1999 update was to review unroaded areas for updated criteria, correct mapping errors through application of GIS mapping and adjust the inventory for areas where harvest had occurred, or where planned and did not occur. The criteria for delineation of roadless and other unroaded areas were based on the Regional Roadless Area Inventory protocol (Regional Office, 1996). The updated inventory identified 11 additional areas and 235,870 additional acres for a total of 43 IRAs and 639,100 acres of NFS land (see figure 36). This inventory was included in the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

For the purposes of this evaluation, the IRAs shown in figure 36 have been determined to qualify as the potential wilderness inventory. They are all areas within NFS lands and satisfy the definition of wilderness found in section 2(c) of the 1964 Wilderness Act, and subsequent policy or direction.

Table 112 summarizes the change in potential wilderness inventory that has occurred since the 1987 Forest Plan was adopted. Currently, a total of 43 areas of potential wilderness inventory (IRAs), are distributed across the Forest comprising approximately 638,034 acres of undeveloped area. These areas provide a range of primitive and semi-primitive recreation opportunities. Overall, recreation levels are relatively low compared to the use that is occurring in roaded and developed areas that offer easier access and a greater variety of amenities and services.

**Table 112. Potential Wilderness Inventory Summary (IRAs)**

	1987 Forest Plan	1999 Inventory <sup>1</sup> (NFS Land Only)	Net Change 1987 to 2001
Number of Areas	32	43	+11
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>403,300</b>	<b>638,034</b>	<b>234,734</b>

<sup>1</sup> Acres updated 2013 with current GIS mapping

Under direction of the Chief of the Forest Service (Roadless Activities Review Process, May 31, 2012 letter) certain activities planned roadless areas will continue to be reviewed at the national or regional level.

### *Evaluation for Wilderness Potential*

Each of the 43 roadless areas was evaluated to rate and then determine their potential for wilderness designation. All IRAs were assessed for capability and availability. A need analysis was then completed. Appendix C contains details of the IRA evaluations. Opportunities and experiences one would expect to find and manageability of an area was incorporated to determine which IRAs were suitable for potential inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Table 113 is a summary of the potential wilderness inventory suitability evaluation ratings by IRA. IRAs are listed alphabetically in this report and appendix C.

**Table 113. Potential Wilderness Inventory by IRA, and Suitability Ratings**

IRA		Total Area KNF Acres	Rating		
Name	#		Capability	Availability	Need
Alexander <sup>1</sup>	696	6,714	Low/Mod	Moderate	Low
Allen Peak <sup>1</sup>	185	29,618	Moderate	High	High
Barren Peak <sup>1</sup>	183	14,526	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Berray Mountain	672	9,105	Moderate	Moderate	High
Big Creek <sup>1</sup>	701	7,526	Moderate	Moderate	High
Buckhorn Ridge	661	28,789	High	High	High
Cabinet Face East	671	50,192	High	Low to High	High
Cabinet Face West	670	13,683	High	High	High
Cataract Creek	665	25,441	Moderate	Low	High
Chippewa	682	1,261	High	High	Moderate
Cube Iron	784	623	Low	High	Low
Devil's Gap <sup>1</sup>	698	5,350	Mod/High	High	High
East Fork Elk	678	6,766	Moderate	Moderate	High
Flagstaff	690	11,103	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Galena	677	19,293	Moderate	Moderate	High
Gold Hill	668	6,452	Low/Mod	Moderate	Low
Gold Hill West	176	15,072	Moderate	High	Moderate
Government Mountain	673	10,084	Low/Mod	Moderate	Moderate
Grizzly Peak	667	7,436	Moderate	High	Moderate
Huckleberry Mountain <sup>1</sup>	699	8,959	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
LeBeau	507	1,258	Low	High	Moderate
Lone Cliff Smeads	674	5,115	Low	Low	Moderate
Lone Cliff West <sup>1</sup>	674a	5,311	Low/Mod	Low	Moderate
Maple Peak	141	3,588	Low	High	Low
Marston Face	172	9,092	Moderate	High	Moderate
McKay Creek	676	15,286	Mod/high	Moderate	Moderate
McNeeley	675	6,653	Low	High	High
Mt Henry <sup>1</sup>	666	13,596	Moderate	High	Low
Northwest Peaks	663	15,341	High	High	High
Roberts	691	10,815	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Robinson Mountain <sup>1</sup>	164	7,030	Moderate	High	Low
Rock Cr	693	806	High	Low	High
Roderick	684	29,657	High	High	High
Saddle Mountain <sup>1</sup>	168	14,666	Mod/High	High	Moderate
Scotchman Peaks	662	54,439	High	High	Moderate
Ten Lakes & Ten Lakes Contiguous	683 & 683a	48,510	Mod/High	Moderate	High
Thompson Seton	483	29,379	Moderate	High	Moderate
Trout Creek	664	30,866	Moderate	Low	Moderate

IRA		Total Area KNF Acres	Rating		
Name	#		Capability	Availability	Need
Tuchuck	482	2,235	Moderate	High	Moderate
West Fork Elk	692	5,117	Low	Low	High
West Fork Yaak <sup>1</sup>	694	8,232	Mod/Low	High	Moderate
Willard Estelle	173	33,046	High	Moderate	Moderate
Zulu	166	10,004	Moderate	High	Moderate
<b>Total</b>		<b>638,034</b>			

<sup>1</sup> IRA added since 1987 Forest Plan

In addition to inherent wilderness quality (ratings for capability, availability, and need), an area must provide opportunities and experiences that are dependent or enhanced by a wilderness environment, and the manageability of the area as a wilderness should be considered (FSH 1909.12, 72). Other considerations in determining suitability include: size and shape of the IRA, location in relation to other IRAs or designated wilderness, adjacent property, adjacent forest's evaluation, public comments, social and economic considerations, or administrative recommendations.

The areas of potential wilderness inventory were rated as high, moderate, or low for each of the three categories of suitability. Based on the inventories, each area was then rated as suitable or not for inclusion as potential wilderness. Recommended wilderness differed by action alternative. The recommendation of wilderness was made based on a composite of the three ratings, alternative theme, and other considerations such as: size and shape, location to designated wilderness, adjacent property, public comments, social and economic considerations, or administrative recommendations. See appendix C for specific information on recommended wilderness by IRA.

IRAs rated as low in any category were dropped from further consideration unless recommended for wilderness in the 1987 Plan, or there were other considerations. For example, Rock Creek IRA was evaluated as Low for Availability, however portions of the area were recommended as wilderness due to it being adjacent to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness. Fifteen potential wilderness inventory areas were determined not to be suitable based on a low rating, and were not recommended as wilderness in any alternative.

An additional twelve potential wilderness inventory areas, while rated moderate or high in all suitability categories, were determined to not be suitable based on other considerations and not recommended as wilderness in any alternative. Reasons for this varied from identified public concerns, need of treatment for fuel reduction, adjacent private lands, unmanageable boundaries, existing recreation uses (over-snow, motorized and/or mechanical), and white bark pine restoration needs or road/fish restoration needs.

For example, Northwest Peaks IRA rated high in all suitability categories, but was determined not to be suitable based on comments from the public and elected officials. This area is a popular over-snow vehicle use area. The majority of Northwest Peaks IRA is allocated to MA3 (special areas) in all alternatives to maintain its unique character, and allow for existing uses (see appendix C for suitability ratings, and rationale for determination of recommended wilderness).

Parts of fifteen IRAs, grouped in nine areas, were identified as capable, available, and determined suitable as recommended wilderness (see table 114). The Potential Wilderness



inventory (IRA and surrounding areas) identified as suitable as recommended wilderness total 251,107 acres or approximately 11 percent of the KNF. Recommended wilderness in the FEIS is comprised of all of parts of the Potential Wilderness inventory and varies by alternative.

**Table 114. Potential Wilderness Inventory Rated Suitable as Recommended Wilderness**

IRA		Total IRA Acres	Rated Suitable as Recommended Wilderness	
Name	#		Acres <sup>1</sup>	Name
Allen Peak	185	29,618	20,500	Allen Peak
Barren Peak	183	14,526	2,059	Cabinet Mountains <sup>2</sup>
Big Creek	701	7,526	6,616	Big Creek
Cabinet Face East	671	50,192	33,667	Cabinet Mountains <sup>2</sup>
Cabinet Face West	670	13,683	8,027	Cabinet Mountains <sup>2</sup>
Chippewa	682	1,261	361	Cabinet Mountains <sup>2</sup>
Gold Hill West	176	15,072	12,117	Gold Hill West
Marston Face	172	9,092	7,887	Whitefish Divide
McKay Creek	676	15,286	8,741	Cabinet Mountains <sup>2</sup>
Rock Creek	693	806	581	Cabinet Mountains <sup>2</sup>
Roderick	684	29,657	23,472	Roderick
Saddle Mountain	168	14,666	14,291	Saddle Mountain
Scotchman Peaks	662	54,439	37,268	Scotchman Peaks
Ten Lakes <sup>3</sup>	683	33,778	33,778	Ten Lakes Montana Wilderness Study Area
Ten Lakes Contiguous	683a	14,732	8,257	Ten Lakes Contiguous Area
Thompson Seton	483	29,379	27,954	Whitefish Divide
Tuchuck	482	2,235	2,153	Whitefish Divide
Area outside IRAs			3,378	
<b>Total</b>			<b>251,107</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Potential wilderness acres do not match total acres for individual roadless areas because boundaries of recommended wilderness areas sometimes include acres outside of the roadless boundary and sometimes exclude some of the roadless area

<sup>2</sup> Existing Cabinet Mountains Wilderness additions

<sup>3</sup> Includes acres for Ten Lakes WSA (MA1c)

This evaluation of potential wilderness inventory is not a land designation, nor does it imply any particular level of management direction or protection in association with the evaluation of these potential wilderness areas. The evaluation was completed with the express purpose during forest planning to identify all lands that meet the criteria for being evaluated for wilderness suitability and possible recommendation to Congress for wilderness designation (FSH 1909.12.71).

Areas not recommended for wilderness in the revised Forest Plan remain IRAs, and could still be considered for wilderness by Congress.

### *Recommended Wilderness*

As a result of decisions made in the 1987 Forest Plan, 102,500 acres were recommended for wilderness (see table 115). This included 26,000 of the 34,200 acres of the Ten Lakes Montana Wilderness Study Area (MWSA). Under the Northern Regions FSM 1923.12 the approach for

conducting wilderness study on further planning areas in Ten Lakes MWSA is pending Congressional action. The Ten Lakes MWSA would continue to be managed under the 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Act in all action alternatives. Alternative A is the existing condition for recommended wilderness and Montana Wilderness Study Area. These 1987 areas recommended for wilderness including the MWSA, were identified because of special or unique features and public support

**Table 115. 1987 KNF Forest Plan Recommended Wilderness**

Name	MA8 Acres <sup>1</sup>	MA9 <sup>1</sup> Acres
Cabinet Additions	33,600	
Scotchman Peaks	36,100	
Ten Lakes Contiguous Area	6,800	
Ten Lakes Montana Wilderness Study Area		26,000
<b>Total 102,500</b>	<b>76,500</b>	<b>26,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> Acres have been updated from the 1987 Forest Plan to reflect current GIS layers and data.

Under the 1987 Forest Plan, the use of motorized and mechanized equipment in recommended wilderness and the WSA is allowed to varying degrees. The Ten Lakes contiguous area (MA8) and wilderness study area (MA9) remain open to snowmobiles in winter while the other recommended wilderness areas are closed to vehicles year-round. There has been use in the Scotchman Peaks recommended wilderness by over-snow vehicles, which is not permissible. Law enforcement patrols and monitoring of the area will continue.

Levels of recreational motorized travel forestwide were much lower in the mid-1980s when the 1987 Forest Plan was completed. The increased popularity and expansion of these uses, the potential of these activities to affect wilderness character, and potential for designation were not fully anticipated. No recommended wilderness is currently closed to bicycles or other non-motorized mechanized transport such as game carts, backcountry in-line skates or skate boards, or hang gliders.

#### *Idaho Roadless Rule*

Approximately 35,100 acres, in five IRAs managed by the KNF, are located in the state of Idaho and are managed under the Idaho Roadless Rule of 2008. The Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294 Subpart C) establishes management direction for designated roadless areas in the state of Idaho.

The five areas straddle both state lines and forest boundaries. Only the portions of IRAs located in the state of Idaho are managed under the Idaho Roadless Rule. A total of ten IRAs are managed jointly with other forests. Total IRA acres are shown in table 116 for reference.

**Table 116. Idaho Roadless Rule Areas and Jointly Managed IRAs on the Kootenai National Forest**

Area	IRA Number	KNF Acres		Other Forest Acres <sup>3</sup>			Total IRA Acres
		Idaho <sup>1</sup>	Montana <sup>2</sup>	Idaho <sup>1</sup>	Montana <sup>2</sup>	Forest	
Buckhorn Ridge	661	100	28,688	6,600	2,900	IPNF	38,288
East Fork Elk	678		6,766	100		IPNF	6,866
Maple Peak	141		3,588	8,700	6,469	IPNF LNF	18,757
Willard Estelle	173	23,300	9,745	35,000		IPNF	68,045
North West Peaks	663		15,341		5,500	IPNF	20,841
Roberts	691	7,400	3,417				10,814
Scotchman Peak	662	500	54,439	19,900	12,300	IPNF	86,639
Trout Creek	664		30,866	8,500		IPNF	39,366
Thompson Seton	483		29,379		52,234	FNF	81,613
Tuchuck	482		2,235		17,730	FNF	19,965
West Fork Elk	692	3,700	1,500				5,200
<b>Total</b>		<b>35,100</b>					

<sup>1</sup> Managed under the Idaho Roadless Rule 2008<sup>2</sup> Managed under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule<sup>3</sup> Managed under other Forest Plan

## Environmental Consequences

The purpose of the analysis on the roadless resource is to disclose potential effects to roadless and wilderness attributes and determine if, or to what extent, it might affect future consideration for wilderness recommendations. This analysis focuses on the potential effects of land management designations and allowable uses on wilderness characteristics as defined in the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.12 (72.1), issued in 2007. Wilderness characteristics, as defined in FSH 1909.12 (72.1) and evaluated here, include the following:

- Natural – The extent to which long-term ecological processes are intact and operating.
- Undeveloped – The degree to which the impacts documented in natural integrity are apparent to most visitors.
- Outstanding opportunities for solitude or primitive unconfined recreation – Solitude is a personal, subjective value defined as the isolation from sights, sounds, and presence of others, and from developments and evidence of humans. Primitive recreation is characterized by meeting nature on its own terms, without comfort and convenience of facilities.
- Special features and values – Unique ecological, geographical, scenic, and historical features of an area.
- Manageability – The ability to manage an area for wilderness consideration and maintain wilderness attributes.

### General Effects

The following discussion includes general effects on roadless areas, identified as potential wilderness inventory areas (IRAs) for Forest Planning. Management allocations will not directly affect the character of potential wilderness inventory areas (IRAs) until a planned management activity is scheduled. Activities may be proposed in IRAs, but must be further evaluated in site-specific NEPA prior to approval and implementation. Management activities that substantially alter the undeveloped character of an inventoried roadless area of 5,000 acres or more, generally requires preparation of an EIS (FSH 1909.15 21.2).

The allocation of MA1b (recommended wilderness) is designed to provide areas where wilderness characteristics are protected. This management area is designed to meet Forest Service Manual and Handbook requirements and contains direction to manage the recreation settings to the standards established for recommended wilderness areas.

The effects for all alternatives are based on assigned MAs and their potential for development. Table 117 displays the acres by recommended wilderness area for each alternative.

**Table 117. Acres of Recommended Wilderness by Alternative**

Recommended Wilderness Area	Acres by Alternative <sup>1</sup>			
	A	B Modified	C	D
Scotchman Peaks	36,100	35,900	37,300	
Cabinet Additions	33,600	29,900	53,700	37,300
Ten Lakes (includes MA1c WSA when Ten Lakes Contiguous is recommended wilderness)	32,800		34,600	
Whitefish Divide		16,000	40,100	
Roderick		23,500	23,500	
Saddle Mountain			14,300	
Allen Peak			20,500	
Big Creek			6,600	
Gold Hill West			12,200	
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>102,500</b>	<b>105,300</b>	<b>242,800</b>	<b>37,300</b>

<sup>1</sup> Acres don't match forestwide summary acres by MA because of overlapping acres within MA

Each alternative displays a mix of land and resource uses that meet public needs for additional recommended wilderness areas in the National Wilderness Preservation System based on the alternative theme. Recommended wilderness areas differed by alternative, addressing a range of options.

The Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness area is made up of parts of up to three IRAs, depending on the alternative: Marston Face, Thompson Seton, and Tuchuck. Changes in recommended wilderness for Whitefish Divide were made between draft and final in response to public comment.

In Alternative B Modified areas above the town of Rexford and Williams Creek were moved from recommended wilderness MA1b to backcountry MA5a due to concerns from the community. These concerns included potential management needs within areas that provide public water for the town of Rexford and areas of past logging in Williams Creek. This

alternative would provide for some mechanized use on trails. The areas of concern were allocated to MA5a.

The revised Forest Plan Whitefish Divide recommended wilderness area on the KNF includes areas which are outside of an IRA (cherry stem of closed road systems and associated harvest in Blue Sky and Williams Creek) for manageability. Areas outside of the IRA account for approximately 13 percent of the total acres of recommended wilderness in Alternative B Modified, and 5 percent of the recommended wilderness in Alternative C.

Alternative B Modified does not include the Ten Lakes Area as recommended wilderness but adds two additional areas: Whitefish Divide and Roderick. Both Whitefish Divide and Roderick areas have similar evaluations as Ten Lakes, but provide a higher degree of solitude. In addition, the Ten Lakes area is valued by local communities for its over-snow motorized opportunities.

Alternative C recommends the most wilderness, retaining the same areas as under the current Plan and adding six additional areas: Whitefish Divide, Roderick, Saddle Mountain, Allen Peak, Big Creek, and Gold Hill West. Alternative D recommends the least wilderness, recommending only the parts of the Cabinet Additions.

### *Effects of Forestwide Direction*

#### **Alternative A — No-action Alternative**

This alternative reflects the 1987 Forest Plan, as amended to date, and accounts for current laws and regulations that have been issued since the original Forest Plan and the amendments were adopted. The 1987 ROD identified three recommended wilderness areas: Scotchman Peaks, Cabinet Additions, and Ten Lakes Contiguous Area for a total of 102,500 acres. The Ten Lakes MWSA would continue to be managed under the Montana Wilderness Study Act.

#### **Alternatives B Modified, C, and D**

All action alternatives recommend some wilderness, to varying degrees. Alternative B Modified recommends four potential wilderness areas: Scotchman Peaks, Cabinet Additions, Whitefish Divide, and Roderick for a total of 105,300 acres. Alternative C recommends nine potential wilderness areas for a total of 242,800 acres while Alternative D recommends the least number of acres, 37,300 acres (Cabinet Wilderness Additions). Desired conditions, standards, and guidelines for MA1c (Wilderness Study Area) would apply regardless of which alternative are selected for implementation. Under the Northern Regions FSM 1923.12 the approach for conducting wilderness study on further planning areas in Ten Lakes MWSA is pending Congressional action. The Ten Lakes MWSA would continue to be managed under the 1977 Montana Wilderness Study Act in all action alternatives.

### *Consequences to Roadless Areas from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Management Area Allocations**

Research shows Americans that engage in outdoor activities are seeking opportunities for day hikes. Typically, visitors prefer day hiking to a destination such as a waterfall, lake, scenic vista, or unique feature. Forests near population centers in Montana and Idaho should continue to consider this need for non-motorized hiking trails as they complete their wilderness assessments (Regional Wilderness needs assessment 2003).

Table 118 shows the distribution of the 638,034 acres of inventoried roadless area, across the range of MAs in each alternative. All the acres shown were included in the roadless area review completed for forest plan revision (see appendix C). Inventoried roadless areas, although allocated to various MAs, would also be managed under either the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, or for areas in Idaho, the 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule.

**Table 118. Acres of Inventory Roadless Area Management Area Allocation by Alternative**

MA	Alt A <sup>1</sup>	Alt B Modified <sup>2</sup>	Alt C <sup>2</sup>	Alt D <sup>2</sup>
MA1a Wilderness	0	0	0	0
MA1b Wilderness Recommended	76,085	100,716	205,334	35,912
MA1c Wilderness Study Area	34,521	33,778	33,778	33,778
MA2 Eligible Wild and Scenic River	0	8,610	8,140	12,770
MA3 Special Areas	7,907	14,186	12,379	13,650
MA4 Research Natural Areas	Included in MA3	6,668	5,855	5,856
MA5a Backcountry - Non-motorized Year-round	234,690	225,382	322,861	110,799
MA5a/5b Combined	27,326	0	0	0
MA5b Backcountry - Motorized Year-round (Summer only on designated routes/areas)	1,349	153,844	33,607	47,759
MA5c Backcountry – Winter Motorized, Summer Non-motorized	0	81,375	9,967	114,582
MA6 General Forest Area	243,788	13,468	6,105	262,926
MA7 Recreation Area	76	0	0	0
Unknown	12,226	0	0	0

<sup>1</sup> The 1987 Forest Plan did not categorize MA by these descriptions, acres are rounded and may not equal total potential wilderness inventory due to GIS mapping.

<sup>2</sup> Acres do not match forestwide summary acres by MA because of overlapping acres within MA, and acres outside of IRAs included in recommended wilderness are not shown.

Management area allocation can be grouped into broad categories: areas that allow a full range of development opportunities (MA6, MA7); areas that have potential for low levels of development and maintain their undeveloped roadless character (MA2, MA3, MA4, MA5a, MA5b, and MA5c); and areas that are recommended as wilderness (MA1b). Management area allocations will not directly affect the character of IRAs until management activities are planned and implemented. Table 119 summarizes the MAs allocated to each IRA for each alternative.

In general, Alternative D allocates the most acres of IRAs to allow a full range of development opportunities. Alternatives A, B Modified, and C allocate the least acres of IRAs to development and provide the best opportunity to maintain their underdeveloped roadless character.

**Table 119. Inventoried Roadless Area Management Area Allocation by Alternative**

Inventoried Roadless Area		Area	Action Alternative/MA(s)		
Name	#		B Modified	C	D
Alexander	696		2,5a	2,5a	2,5a
Allen Peak	185	Allen Peak	2,3,5b	1b, 2,3,5a,5b,6	2,3,6
Barren Peak	183	Cabinet Addn's	5b	1b,5a,5b	6
Berray Mountain	672		2,5a	2,5a	2,6
Big Creek	701	Big Creek	2,5c	1b, 2,6	2,5c
Buckhorn Ridge	661		5a,5c	5a,5b,6	5c
Cabinet Face East	671	Cabinet Addn's	1b,2,4,5a,5b	1b,2,,5a,6	1b, 2,4,5a,6
Cabinet Face West	670	Cabinet Addn's	1b, 2,4,5a	1b, 2,5a,6	1b, 2,4,5a,6
Cataract Creek	665		2,4,5a,5b	2,4,5a	2,4,6
Chippewa	682	Cabinet Addn's	1b,2,5a,6	1b,2,5a,5b,6	1b,2,6
Cube Iron	784		5a	5a	5b
Devil's Gap	698		5b	5b	6
East Fork Elk	678		5a,5c	5a	6
Flagstaff	690		2,3,4,5a,5c	2,3,4,5a	2,3,4,6
Galena	677		3,5b	3,5a	3,6
Gold Hill	668		6	5c	6
Gold Hill West	176	Gold Hill West	3,5c	1b,3,5a,5c,6	3,5c,6
Government Mtn	673		2,5a	2,5a	2,5b,6
Grizzly Peak	667		5a	5a,5b,6	5a,6
Huckleberry Mtn	699		5b	5b	6
LeBeau	507		4,5b	4,5a	4,6
Lone Cliff Smeads	674		5b	5b	6
Lone Cliff West	674a		5b	5a	6
Maple Peak	141		5b	5b	6
Marston Face	172	Whitefish Div	5a,5b,6	1b,5a,5b,6	5c
McKay Creek	676	Cabinet Addn's	1b, 3,5a,5b,6	1b, 3,5a,5b	1b,3,6
McNeeley	675		5b	5b	6
Mt Henry	666		2,5a	2,5a,5c	2,5c
Northwest Peaks	663		3,5a,5c,6	3,5a,5b	3,5b,5c,6
Roberts	691		5a	5a,5b,6	5b
Robinson Mtn	164		5a	5a	5a,5c
Rock Cr	693	Cabinet Addn's	1b,3,5b,6	1b,3,5b	3,6
Roderick	684	Roderick	1b,2,5a,5b,6	1b,2,5a,5b,6	2,5a
Saddle Mtn	168	Saddle Mtn	2,5a,5c,6	1b,2,5a,6	2,5a,6
Scotchman Peaks	662	Scotchman Pks	1b,2,3,4,5a,5c	1b,2,3,4,5a	2,3,4,5a,6
Ten Lakes	683	Ten Lakes Cont	1c,2,35a,5b,6	1b,1c,2,3,5a,5b,5c	1c,2,3,5c,6
Thompson Seton	483	Whitefish Div	1b,5a,5b,6	1b,2,5a,5b	2,5a,5c
Trout Creek	664		5a,5b	5a	6

Inventoried Roadless Area		Area	Action Alternative/MA(s)		
Name	#		B Modified	C	D
Tuchuck	482	Whitefish Div	5a	1b,2,5b	2,5c
West Fork Elk	692		5a	5a	5b
West Fork Yaak	694		2,4,5a	2,4,5a	2,4,5a,6
Willard Estelle	173		3,5a	3,5a	3,5c
Zulu	166		3,5c	3,5a	3,5c

Appendix C contains information on the allocation of each roadless area by alternative. The effects for all alternatives are based on assigned management area direction and their potential for development. The forestwide and MA direction is the same for all action alternatives.

### Effects from Fire and Fuels Management

Forest health, as it affects natural integrity, is an issue of concern with IRAs and recommended wilderness. Effective fire suppression, insect and disease infestations, and vegetation and fuel types on the KNF have led to excessive fuel buildup. Lightning caused fires may be managed to meet resource benefits to trend vegetation towards desired conditions. Likewise, prescribed fire may be used to trend vegetation towards the desired conditions while serving other important ecosystem functions.

Roadless areas allocated to the MA5s would use prescribed fire and natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives as the primary mechanism for managing vegetation (MA5a, b, c-GDL-Fire-01). The use of natural, unplanned ignitions would be more likely in Alternative C, which emphasizes the use of natural disturbances and has the highest acres of recommended wilderness.

Prescribed fire and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions would continue the long-term ecological processes in these areas. There could be a temporary loss of vegetation, reduction in water quality due to sedimentation, air pollution, and a perceived reduction in scenic quality; however, these effects are part of the natural ecological processes. These activities generally would not affect the undeveloped character, except during the actual burning period when crews are burning or monitoring the burns. Users could expect temporary access restrictions during periods of fire use activities. Impacts to opportunities for solitude could be expected where visitors encounter crews working on firing operations.

Prescribed fire and the use of natural, unplanned ignitions should not affect primitive recreation, although recreational use of burned-over areas may drop for a period of years until vegetative recovery achieves a more advanced stage. Lethal fire in heavy timber stands would also increase long-term trail maintenance needs from continued downfall of snags across trails.

### Effects from Timber Harvest

Roadless areas that are allocated to MA1b (recommended wilderness), MA1c (wilderness study area) are not available for timber harvest. Limited timber harvest could occur in MA2 (scenic or recreation rivers), MA3 (special areas) and MA4 (research natural areas); only if done to maintain or restore the values or meet the objectives of the area. Timber harvest is also limited in the MA5s (backcountry).



For those lands in MA6, timber harvest could occur for the purposes of timber production. Other forestwide management direction would apply to these areas and could constrain the extent, timing, and duration of timber harvest in MA6 (see standards and guidelines for MA 6 in the revised Forest Plan).

Treatment of vegetation by mechanical means can affect natural appearance with creation of linear patterns and presence of stumps. The existing roadless character may be modified where timber harvest occurs.

In the MA5s, timber harvest is expected to be limited and generally would be done for purposes that would result in retaining the natural integrity of the ecosystem. Timber harvest that is done to reduce hazardous fuels may be more intensive and change the undeveloped character, to some degree, until the vegetation re-grows. This is most likely to happen on the edges of a roadless area nearer communities. Primitive recreation opportunities would be unchanged.

Timber harvest in MA6 could be more extensive. Alternatives B Modified and C only have small acreages allocated to MA6 (6,000 – 13,000 acres). In these alternatives, the IRAs in MA6 are on the edges of the roadless areas, and generally adjacent to roads. Activities in these areas would not be in the heart of the roadless areas and would not affect a roadless areas ability to provide primitive recreation or solitude. The only exception is the 6,500 acre Gold Hill roadless area, allocated to MA6 in Alternatives B Modified and D. This roadless area is small in size and currently provides limited primitive recreation opportunities or opportunities for solitude.

Alternative D allocates a larger portion of roadless areas (more than 250,000 acres) to MA6, where timber harvests would have a larger impact on roadless characteristics. The undeveloped character of roadless areas could be affected where timber harvest occurs, at least until the vegetation re-grows. If roads are constructed to access any of these areas, they could also affect the primitive nature and undeveloped character.

Vegetation and fuel treatments designed to increase hardwoods, reduce conifer encroachment, reduce fuels, maintain some level of old growth, are desirable in IRAs because these actions help restore natural conditions.

### **Effects from Terrestrial Wildlife Management**

Wildlife management actions may result in a broad array of physical alterations: including road obliteration, vegetation treatments, prescribed burning, and habitat improvement structures. Some of these actions could be visually evident and detract somewhat from IRA values and wilderness characteristics. However, actions which maintain, restore, protect, or enhance wildlife habitat also improve natural integrity and ecosystem function and benefit IRA and wilderness values in the long-term.

Allocations of MAs that are non-motorized and benefit wildlife should also have beneficial effects on IRAs. Alternative C would result in the most lands allocated in non-motorized MAs, improving roadless character of the individual IRAs.

Watershed and fisheries improvement actions can include construction of structures for stream bank stabilization, slope stabilization, and fish habitat improvements. Some structural improvements may be visually evident, and may detract from apparent naturalness. However, any such improvement structures are generally small and localized and would have a negligible effect upon undeveloped character and wilderness characteristics.

### Effects from Minerals Management

Inventoried roadless areas in prescription which are administratively unavailable for mineral development will be largely unaffected by development. All other IRAs are potentially affected by development of minerals under the mining law. Mineral exploration and development activities can vary from small, easily reclaimed operations to larger developments. Large mines may lead to extensive site alterations and long-term impacts to the undeveloped character of IRAs and to wilderness characteristics. These impacts may reduce roadless inventories by removing portions of IRAs where mining occurs. However, evidence of past mining, and even ongoing mining operation, do not necessarily preclude wilderness consideration, although they may make it less likely.

The exploration and development of locatable minerals is allowed within IRAs and recommended wilderness as secured by the Mining Act of 1872 and does not vary by alternative. Therefore, effects are common to all alternatives.

### Effects from Access and Recreation Management

Areas that are recommended for wilderness will be managed to protect the wilderness character of that area. As the population grows, use is likely to increase. An increase in use may lead to improvement of trailhead facilities or visitor use management techniques.

Opportunities for primitive and non-motorized recreation will be found in IRAs and areas recommended for wilderness designation. Inventoried roadless areas that are assigned to other MAs will be managed for the recreation opportunities appropriate to the assigned MAs. The existing settings are generally semi-primitive non-motorized in character.

Trails and new trail construction is usually compatible with maintaining wilderness characteristics and undeveloped character.

In roadless areas allocated to recommended wilderness (MA1b) foot and horse travel will be permitted. In MA1b (and MA4) motorized and mechanized travel will be prohibited. MA1b will also prohibit motorized equipment, with the exception of hand held motorized equipment (i.e., chain saw) for administrative use. The Ten Lakes MWSA is MA1c, and will be managed under the Montana Wilderness Study Act. The Ten Lakes WSA acres are not included in this analysis.

Roadless areas not recommended for wilderness may have a variety of motorized or mechanized opportunities depending on the MA assigned. Table 120 displays the miles or acres of change in open or closed access and recreation use. Alternative C, then B Modified, A, and D provide for the most non-motorized, non-mechanized travel opportunities in IRAs. See the “Access and Recreation” section for additional information on road and area closures in MA1b and MA4.

**Table 120. Summary of MA1b and MA4 Access and Recreation Site-Specific by Alternative**

Type of Access or Recreation	Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Trail Motor Vehicle Use	Miles			
Open	144	144	144	144
Change	0	0	0	0
Over-snow Motor Vehicle Use <sup>1</sup>	Acres			
Open	1,961,100	1,920,500	1,814,800	1,988,500
Closed	258,000	300,700	406,400	231,400

Type of Access or Recreation	Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Change to Closed	0	58,300	155,000	10,700
Mechanized Use (bicycle, cart, etc.)	Acres (includes all trails in area)			
Open	2,125,400	2,012,900	1,902,700	2,082,200
Closed	93,700	206,200	316,400	136,900
Change	0	112,500	222,700	43,200

<sup>1</sup>The Ten Lakes WSA (MA1c) is not included in these numbers

Cross-country motor-vehicle use off of designated roads and trails and outside designated areas as displayed on the KNF MVUMs is prohibited. Over-snow vehicle use would be restricted by Forest Order in all MA1b and MA4 designated areas. Changes in number of acres by alternative includes: acres in MA4, additional closures areas MA1b, and reductions in acreage from 1987 recommended wilderness area closures that are not recommended wilderness in this analysis.

Mechanized use (wheeled forms of transportation including non-motorized carts, wheelbarrows, bicycles, and any other non-motorized, wheeled vehicle) would be restricted on trails and cross-country in MA1b.

Motorized equipment would not be allowed in all MA1b, with the exception of hand held motorized equipment, such as chain saws, for administrative use. The intent of this exception is to allow for administrative use of motorized equipment for activities such as trail maintenance. Motorized equipment restrictions do not include small battery-hand carried devices such as flashlights, GPS, cameras, or cell phones.

### Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities that were considered with regard to cumulative effects to the wilderness resource. Cumulative effects have been considered for the life of the Plan. The area of consideration is the KNF.

Reasonable and foreseeable actions on NFS lands include: future vegetation management, mining/reclamation, population growth, expansion of ski areas, and reduction of fuels in WUI. Community plans, such as the County Comprehensive Plans and Fire Plans, may influence the management of IRAs.

Population growth and development increases the need for public open space. Growth in Lincoln and Sanders Counties, as well as surrounding areas in Montana, Idaho, and Washington, is likely to increase recreation use of the Forest including an increase in use within recommended wilderness. The effects of urbanization and population growth on wilderness use and resource conditions are likely to be gradual and extend well beyond the planning period.

Inventoried roadless area characteristics are changed by development such as roads, timber management, recreation facilities, reservoirs, etc. The development of the KNF for human benefit is a long-term continuing trend. The development of roads and management of vegetation has affected roadless areas in the past. Since the mapping of roadless areas in 1999 and the evaluation for wilderness potential there have been fewer developments which have changed the roadless characteristics of those IRAs.

The alternatives rank D, A, B Modified, and C from the least to most area retaining a roadless undeveloped character over the next 15 years. In terms of wilderness recommendation, the alternatives rank C, B Modified, D, and A from the most to the least area recommended.

Subsequent to the most recent potential wilderness evaluation, no management activities have been implemented which would affect the character of the roadless areas to the extent they would be precluded from future wilderness inclusion. Management activities, which have occurred, include trail management, surveys for noxious weeds, and ongoing studies for grizzly bear and other species.

## *Designated Wilderness, Wilderness Study Area, Recommended Wilderness*

### Introduction

The Wilderness Act of 1964 requires the preservation of wilderness character and recognizes multiple values and public benefits found in these areas. Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreational experiences. Wilderness is also important for maintenance of species diversity, protection of threatened and endangered species, protection of watershed, scientific research, and various social values. Wilderness is part of the national forest multiple use management mission.

The KNF manages three types of areas for their “wilderness character,” designated wilderness, wilderness study area, and recommended wilderness. The KNF manages the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area. The United States Congress designated this area in 1964, consisting of approximately 93,700 acres. All of this wilderness is located in Montana and is managed by the KNF.

The KNF manages one wilderness study area (WSA) – the Ten Lakes WSA. This wilderness study area was designated in 1977, as part of the Montana Wilderness Study Act (Public Law 95-150). It is administered to maintain the wilderness character that existed in 1977, and the potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. Some uses that existed prior to the 1977 Act continue to occur in the WSA.

The KNF manages areas recommended as additions to the national wilderness preservation system. Once the decision is made to recommend an area as wilderness, management actions and decisions affecting these areas should be consistent in protecting and preserving the wilderness character (R1 Consistency Paper). If it is determined that the area is best suited to wilderness designation, the desired condition is to protect wilderness character by:

- Allowing only non-motorized, non-mechanized recreation year around;
- Evaluating any new uses, structures or facilities to determine the effect on wilderness character. New structures and/or facilities need to be commensurate with those that would be constructed in a wilderness setting and consistent in maintaining wilderness character; and
- Administrative use of motorized equipment for maintenance (chain saws, rock drills, and limited use of helicopters) is allowed to continue until designation.

By controlling the setting (environmental, social, and managerial conditions), managers influence the nature and quality of experiences to a substantial degree (Cole and Hall 2009). If Congress were to drop an area from further consideration as recommended wilderness, management would be reconsidered.

This section addresses areas that have already been designated as wilderness or WSAs and recommended wilderness areas. Potential additions to the National Wilderness Preservation system are presented here but the analysis of which areas were recommended for wilderness is explained within the “Roadless Area” section in this chapter.

## Legal and Administrative Framework

### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136):** This act provides the statutory definition of wilderness and management requirements for these congressionally designated areas. This act established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be administered in such a manner as to leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.
- **Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (P.L.95-105):** Provides for the study of certain lands to determine their suitability for designation as wilderness in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964, and for other purposes. These areas are referred to as Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs).
- **National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1600):** Provides that management direction for wilderness be incorporated into Forest Plans and sets minimum standards for the content of the Plans.

### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

- **36 CFR 293:** Wilderness–Primitive Areas
- **36 CFR 212.57:** Monitoring of effects of motor vehicle use on designated roads and trails and in designated areas.
- **36 CFR 261.18:** Prohibitions in National Forest Wilderness.

### Key Indicator

- Acres of recommended wilderness.

### Changes between Draft and Final

Clarification and additional information was provided on the three areas that will be managed for wilderness character: designated wilderness, recommended wilderness, and wilderness study areas.

Information was added as to the percent of IRAs allocated to MA5, and reference to the “Roadless Area” section was added.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

#### *Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area*

The Cabinet Mountains derived their name from early French explorers who observed that the mountains resembled a series of closets or cabinets. The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area is located in the southwest-central portion of the KNF, in both Lincoln and Sanders counties. The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area is approximately 34 miles long and varies from ½ mile to 7 miles wide. Elevations range from 2,500 feet to 8,700 feet above sea level, and the vegetation is predominantly subalpine. Glaciations have produced spectacular features such as high craggy peaks, vertical cliffs, knife edge ridges, and many amphitheater-like basins.

Encompassing approximately 94,000 acres, the area includes more than 20 hiking trails, 85 small lakes (many of which are stocked), ridge-top panoramas, and alpine meadows. The numerous drainages from this area flow into the Kootenai and Clark Fork Rivers; and elevations range from 2,500 feet at the base of Grambauer Mountain to 8,738 feet at Snowshoe Peak. As the result

of a wetter climate, the vegetation differs from what characterizes much of western Montana. Elk are the primary game species but the area is also home to grizzly bear, deer, moose, mountain goat, black bear, mountain lion, and numerous smaller animals.

The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area is currently managed under MA7 of the 1987 Forest Plan, and the 2009 Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Plan.

Travel by visitors is apparent on many of the trails leading through the alpine meadows and along streams to many of the lakes; however, trails give access to only about 15 percent of the area. Recreation use in 2007 was estimated at just over 12,000 national forest visits. Types of recreation use vary, with day hiking a major portion of total wilderness use. Other activities include but are not limited to backpacking, horseback riding, fishing, and hunting.

There are significant mineral reserves such as copper and silver. Efforts to develop those minerals are ongoing, see “Minerals” section. There have been no oil and gas leases issued; hence, there are no valid oil or gas lease rights.

Wilderness campsite inventory and conditions surveys have been completed since 1983 by wilderness rangers. In 2008 a campsite and weed inventory was completed under partnership with the University of Montana. A total of 460 weed patches were mapped, with 15 different species of weeds identified. In terms of area covered, orange hawkweed and spotted knapweed are the most abundant.

The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness is designated as Class I Wilderness area under the Clean Air Act amendments of 1977. Air quality related values have been actively monitored since 1993 (USDA Forest Service 2008a).

#### *Ten Lakes Montana Wilderness Study Area*

The Montana Wilderness Study Act of 1977 (MWSA) required the study of certain lands to determine their suitability for designation as wilderness. The Ten Lakes MWSA lies entirely in Lincoln County and is comprised of approximately 34,000 acres. Elevations range from approximately 4,000 feet to nearly 8,000 feet. There are several small lakes in the area. The size and configuration of the area is such that many people hike in and out the same day. The vegetation is sub-alpine with a few spruce basins scattered over the area. The west side is pine and fir and is high quality winter range for elk and deer. The boundary of the Ten Lakes MWSA was delineated in the 1977 Act.

After study, analysis, and evaluation of public comments, the Ten Lakes MWSA Final Report and Proposal was completed in 1985. This report was an administrative report to Congress, and recommended that 26,000 of the 34,000 acres include wilderness recommendation. Congress has not acted on this recommendation.

The Ten Lakes MWSA includes parts of the Ten Lakes Inventoried Roadless Area #638 (IRA). In addition, 26,000 acres of the 34,000 total acres was recommended as wilderness under the 1987 Forest Plan, managed as MA8 and MA9.

Language in the 1977 Act required that the areas be managed to maintain their presently existing wilderness character and potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation system. In 1996 the Montana Wilderness Association filed a complaint that this part of the act had been violated. A Settlement Agreement and Stipulation for Dismissal to the Montana Wilderness Association lawsuit affirms that, pending completion of site-specific travel management plans,

the KNF will manage the Ten Lakes WSA in accordance with applicable law and policy, including but not limited to the Montana Wilderness Study Act and Forest Service Manual 2329. This settlement agreement was reached with the understanding that new travel management plans could either resolve any dispute between the parties or serve to narrow any remaining areas of dispute regarding management of the MWSA (WSA Settlement Agreement March 2007).

The Fortine Ranger District is currently working on a travel management plan, including Ten Lakes MWSA, in the Galton Project. The Galton DEIS is expected in 2013. The Galton project will analyze wilderness character of the MWSA, and will implement any decisions needed to ensure the wilderness character that existed in 1977 is maintained. Evaluation of the wilderness character, and any changes since 1977, will be analyzed in the Galton project and is not part of the forest plan revision.

In 2008, Region 1 Supplement to Forest Service Manual 2329, provided clarification for management of WSAs. The MWSA is to be managed to maintain wilderness character as it existed at the time of designation in 1977. Uses and facilities that existed in 1977 can be allowed to continue subject to 36 CFR 212.57. However, if increases in amount of use occur, the line officer should consider how the increases affect wilderness character and the area's potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

Under the 1987 Forest Plan, over-snow vehicle use is permitted in the Ten Lakes WSA with no restriction on dates of use. All of the area open to over-snow vehicle use is not necessarily used because of terrain, vegetation, dangerous avalanche potential, and personal preferences. There are very few places currently accessed by over-snow vehicles that were not accessed in 1977. One difference in use from 1977 to present is with the newer snowmobile technology. Snowmobiles are now capable of travel in powder-snow conditions, whereas, earlier snowmobiles required harder and more crusted snow, which typically occurs later in the season.

Cross-country motor vehicle use (excluding over-snow vehicle use) is not allowed under the 1987 Plan, as amended. There are no trails in the Ten Lakes WSA designated for motor vehicle use (per 36 CFR 212 Subpart B).

There are currently no restrictions in the 1987 Plan, or in Forest Special Orders, to mechanized use in the Ten Lakes WSA. According to direction (R1 FMS 2329), mountain bikes may be allowed on trails that had established motor-bike use in 1977; or on non-motorized trails as long as the aggregate amount of mountain bike and motorcycle use maintains the wilderness character of the WSA as it existed in 1977. Use levels must be such to maintain the area's potential for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### *Recommended Wilderness*

In the 1987 Forest Plan a total of 102,500 acres, in three areas, were recommended for wilderness: Cabinet Mountains Wilderness additions, Scotchman Peaks, and Ten Lakes areas. Areas recommended for wilderness were defined in the 1987 Forest Plan as MA8 and MA9. Under the 1987 Forest Plan, the use of motorized and mechanized equipment in recommended wilderness and the WSA is allowed, to varying degrees.

The Ten Lakes contiguous area (MA8) and wilderness study area (MA9) remain open to snowmobiles in winter while the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness and Scotchman Peaks recommended wilderness areas are closed to vehicles year-round. No recommended wilderness is currently closed to bicycles or other non-motorized mechanized transport such as game carts, backcountry in-line skates or skate boards, or hang gliders.



## Environmental Consequences

### *Resource Protection Methods*

Designated wilderness is governed largely by the terms of the Wilderness Act and limit human uses and activities. These limitations are designed to retain the wilderness in a natural and wild state. The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness is managed and regulated in an effort to limit human impacts and influences to desired limits. Project proposals within these areas are evaluated for compliance with wilderness values. Commercial use of wilderness is controlled by special use permits and the operation plans that are required under the special use permits.

### *General Effects*

Because direction for wilderness management is detailed in law, regulation, and agency policy and in specific management plans, management in the revision alternatives does not differ. In all alternatives, the existing Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area (MA1a) and Ten Lakes WSA (MA1c) acres remain the same. There will be no affect to undeveloped or special features and values in any alternative.

Significant effects to wilderness areas are not expected under any alternative nor are effects expected to differ by alternative. In all action alternatives the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area (MA1a) is managed under its Wilderness Management Plan (2009).

In all action alternatives the Ten Lakes WSA (MA1b) would be managed to protect wilderness character, as it existed in 1977, and allow activities which do not degrade wilderness character.

All action alternatives and the no-action alternative (Alternative A) propose to manage some of the area directly adjacent to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area as recommended wilderness (MA1b). Alternative C contains the most recommended wilderness (MA1b) adjacent to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area with about the same amount of recommended wilderness in all three other alternatives.

The following discussion of general effects on wilderness addresses recommendations for additional wilderness (MA1b) primarily in roadless areas. See the “Roadless Area” section in this chapter for a discussion of the affected environment. New areas recommended for wilderness designation (MA1b) have the potential effect of protecting wilderness resources. In general, alternatives that have areas recommended for wilderness exclude motorized and mechanized uses.

Recommended wilderness (MA1b) can affect existing wilderness and WSAs. All alternatives recommend new areas for wilderness designation. Designation of new wilderness may change patterns of recreation use and reduce pressure in the existing wilderness. Motorized and mechanized travel on trails and winter motorized use would be prohibited in areas recommended for wilderness designation. Motorcycle, snowmobile, bicycle, and ATV use may be displaced in recommended wilderness areas. Recommended wilderness provides larger areas with wilderness character.

The MA allocation for recommended wilderness (MA1b) does not create a wilderness. Congress must pass legislation designating wilderness. MA1b, recommended wilderness, protects the values that make the area suitable for wilderness designation. Management strategies for recommended wilderness may affect recreation opportunities and experiences within these areas. Approximately 95 percent of the IRAs not allocated as recommended wilderness is allocated to

MA5a. IRAs not allocated as recommended wilderness would be managed under forestwide standards for IRAs, and MA5 or other MA direction.

Both wilderness and the WSA may be affected by MA allocation of adjacent lands by alternative. Alternative C, and then B Modified, would add the most to the size of the protected areas; and therefore, discourage motorized trespass. Alternative D has the least amount of recommended wilderness and would potentially have the most affect by management of adjacent lands in MA6 due to motorized use.

### *Effects of Forestwide Direction*

#### **Alternative A – No-action Alternative**

Alternative A includes three areas identified as recommended wilderness in the 1987 Forest Plan: Cabinet Additions, Scotchman Peaks, and Ten Lakes Area. Total acres were 102,500.

The Scotchman Peaks area is recommended wilderness in Alternatives A, B Modified, and C. Alternative C includes an area on the north end of Scotchman Peaks IRA which is not included in Alternative B Modified.

Additions to the existing Cabinet Mountains Wilderness are recommended in all alternatives. Alternatives A and D are similar in additions to the Cabinet Mountains. Alternative A has additional area by Treasure Mountain and Alternative D has additional area by Goat Creek being included. Ten Lakes Area is included in Alternatives A and C.

#### **Alternative B Modified — Proposed Action**

Alternative B Modified is based on the Proposed Land Management Plan from May 2006 and the response to comments on the proposed Plan, prior to the 2008 Planning Rule being enjoined and vacated, as well as on comments on the 2011 DEIS for this Forest Plan. This alternative allocates 105,300 acres to recommended wilderness on four areas: Cabinet Additions, Roderick, Scotchman Peaks, and Whitefish Divide.

#### **Alternative C**

Alternative C includes nine areas as recommended wilderness totaling 217,300 acres. The nine areas are Allen Peak, Big Creek, Cabinet Additions, Gold Hill West, Roderick, Saddle Mountain, Scotchman Peaks, Ten Lakes Contiguous Area and Whitefish Divide. Alternative C provides for the largest area as recommended wilderness, emphasizing the alternative theme of natural disturbance processes, use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives, and prescribed burns in addition to low-frequency management activities in order to meet watershed and vegetation restoration objectives.

#### **Alternative D**

Alternative D has the least recommended wilderness, identifying only the Cabinet Additions for a total of 37,300 acres. This alternative provides more options for vegetation management and motorized or mechanized access across more areas.

### *Consequences to Wilderness from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Management Area Allocations**

When considering the number of acres where motor vehicle use would be allowed, it must be remembered that this refers only to those acres in MAs where roads or trails may exist and be designated for such use. All four alternatives recommend wilderness and this MA designation would preclude the designation of trails for motor vehicle use. Table 121 (below) displays the recommended wilderness acres by alternative. Motor vehicle use would not be allowed in these areas. Motor vehicle use is prohibited in the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness Area in all four alternatives. Although single track motor vehicle use is allowed within the Ten Lakes WSA as outlined in the Montana Wilderness Study Act, there are no designated trails per 36 CFR 212 Subpart B in any of the four alternatives. Allowed uses within the wilderness area and the WSA do not vary by alternative.

There is an effect to the number of acres available for over-snow vehicle use based on the amount of recommended wilderness (MA1b) in the various alternatives. Table 121 (below) indicates the acreage of recommended wilderness in each alternative. Alternative C would prohibit over-snow vehicle use on the most acreage while Alternative D would limit this use on the least number of acres. Any area that currently has no prohibition to over-snow vehicle use, and is allocated to MA1b (recommended wilderness), will have a legal order prohibiting this use (as per 36 CFR 212.81, and 36 CFR 261.14) issued in conjunction with the final ROD for the revised Forest Plan. See “Roadless Area” section in this chapter. Over-snow vehicle use is prohibited in the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness Area in all four alternatives. Over-snow vehicle use is allowed within the Ten Lakes WSA in all four alternatives as outlined in the Montana Wilderness Study Act. Allowed uses within the wilderness area and the WSA do not vary by alternative.

There is an effect to the number of acres available for mechanized use (e.g., mountain bikes) based on the amount of recommended wilderness (MA1b) in the various alternatives. See “Roadless Area” section in this chapter. Alternative C would prohibit mechanized use on the most acreage while Alternative D would limit this use on the least number of acres. Any area that currently has no prohibition to mechanized use, and is allocated to MA1b (recommended wilderness), will have a legal order prohibiting mechanized use (as per 36 CFR 261.55[b]) issued in conjunction with the ROD for the final Forest Plan. Mechanized use is prohibited in the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness Area in all four alternatives. Mechanized use is allowed within the Ten Lakes WSA in all four alternatives as outlined in the Montana Wilderness Study Act. Allowed uses within the wilderness area and the WSA do not vary by alternative.

Alternative C provides the most recommended wilderness adjacent to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness. Larger areas increase diversity of wilderness and provide greater benefit to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

#### **Effects from Fire and Fuels Management**

Naturally-ignited fires significantly affects the composition, structure, and functioning of many different types of ecosystems. Fire occurs relatively quickly, but the effects may last over long time spans and influence spatial patterns of vegetation and the distribution of wildlife over an entire region. Because naturally-ignited fire is such a key process, fire suppression and climate change have made the vegetation on the KNF more susceptible to large-scale disturbance (fire, insects, and disease). The importance of fire and impacts of fire suppression have long been

understood; and naturally-ignited fire is recognized as a crucial factor in maintaining naturalness within wilderness (Cole and Landres 1995).

Restoring natural processes that occur over large areas, and hundreds of years, will be a formidable management challenge. Restoring natural fire regimes will be difficult because of the risk to property and visitors, both within wilderness as well as on adjacent lands. Fire in its natural role has a positive effect on the natural character of wilderness character. Wildland fire would continue as reintroduced process in the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness under all alternatives, and would have similar effects.

Alternative C, which emphasizes the use of natural disturbances, provides the most benefit to the natural character as use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives would be more likely. Impacts to opportunities for solitude could be expected where visitors encounter crews working on firing operations.

#### **Effects from Vegetation Management**

Vegetation management in wilderness and WSAs is restricted to unplanned ignitions and prescribed fire in all alternatives. Fire control measures would be used if and where fuels and weather increase risk of unwanted fire in or coming out of wilderness. All alternatives provide for use of natural, unplanned ignitions to meet resource objectives in wilderness.

Natural, unplanned ignitions will be utilized in wilderness, recommended wilderness, and WSAs. Alternatives C and B Modified respectively, would benefit most from wildland fire with larger areas of backcountry, where Alternative D would benefit least.

#### **Effects from Access and Recreation Management**

Wilderness itself is equally treated under the alternatives. The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness and Ten Lakes WSA may be affected by management of adjacent lands. All alternatives recommend additions to the size of protected area and further discourage motorized trespass in to wilderness (see table 121). Alternative C has the most non-motorized areas next to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness and is the best for maintaining wilderness character. Although Alternative B Modified has fewer acres of recommended wilderness adjacent to the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness, it has the most acres adjacent in MA5a (non-motorized backcountry); thus, is the second best at protecting the wilderness area. Alternatives A and D are less beneficial than the other alternatives.

Alternatives A and C include Ten Lakes Contiguous Area, recommended wilderness adjacent to the Ten Lakes WSA, and would provide for additional solitude.

**Table 121. Acres of Recommended Wilderness Areas by Alternative**

Recommended Wilderness Area	Acres by Alternative <sup>1</sup>			
	A	B Modified	C	D
Allen Peak			20,500	
Big Creek			6,600	
Cabinet Additions	33,600	29,900	53,700	37,300
Gold Hill West			12,200	
Roderick		23,500	23,500	
Saddle Mountain			14,300	

Recommended Wilderness Area	Acres by Alternative <sup>1</sup>			
	A	B Modified	C	D
Scotchman Peaks	36,100	35,900	37,300	
Ten Lakes (includes MA1c MWSA acres when Ten Lakes Contiguous Area is recommended wilderness)	32,800		34,600	
Whitefish Divide		16,000	40,100	
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>102,500</b>	<b>105,300</b>	<b>242,800</b>	<b>37,300</b>

<sup>1</sup> Acres don't match forestwide summary acres by MA because of overlapping acres with RNAs that are on top of proposed wilderness

Recreation and travel management in the WSA does not change by alternative. Motorized or mechanized use in place prior to 1977 may continue as allowed by law. Recommended wilderness in Alternative C would provide for the most non-motorized use area.

Areas that are recommended for wilderness will be managed to protect the wilderness character of that area. An increase in use may lead to improvement of trailhead facilities or the visitor use management techniques.

### Effects from Minerals Management

The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness Area and Ten Lakes WSA have been withdrawn from mineral entry and are not available for new leases or claims. Surface and mineral estates within the wilderness are entirely federal. Mining activities can result in both short-term and long-term effects from associated structures, roads, vegetation clearing, and general ground-disturbing activities. Two mines are currently under analysis for development under the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness.

### Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects are past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities that were considered with regard to the wilderness resource. Cumulative effects have been considered for the life of the Plan. The area of consideration is the KNF.

Reasonable and foreseeable actions on NFS lands include: future vegetation management, mining/reclamation, population growth, County Comprehensive Plans, expansion of ski areas, and Fire Plan – priority WUI areas. There have been mineral developments surrounding the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness.

Population growth and development increases the need for public open space. Growth in Lincoln and Sanders County, as well as surrounding areas of Flathead County, Idaho, and Washington is likely to increase recreation use of the Forest, including an increase in wilderness use. The effects of urbanization and population growth on wilderness use and resource conditions are likely to be gradual and extend well beyond the planning period.

No Forest Plan alternative would change the amount of existing wilderness that occurs within the state of Montana or the National Wilderness Preservation System. Currently the KNF contributes approximately 2 percent of designated wilderness within Montana, and less than 1/1000 percent of national wilderness.

## *Wild and Scenic Rivers*

### Introduction

Congress enacted the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968 to preserve select river's free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values. The most important provision of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is protecting rivers from the harmful effects of water resources projects. To protect free-flowing character the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (which licenses non-federal hydropower projects) is not allowed to license construction of dams, water conduits, reservoirs, powerhouses, transmission lines, or other project works on or directly affecting wild and scenic rivers. Other federal agencies may not assist by loan, grant, and license or otherwise any water resources project that would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which a river was designated.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act also directs that each river in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (National System) be administered in a manner to protect and enhance a river's outstanding natural and cultural values. It allows existing uses of a river to continue and future uses to be considered, so long as existing or proposed use does not conflict with protecting river values. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act also directs building partnerships among landowners, river users, tribal nations, and all levels of government.

Rivers may be identified for suitability studies by an act of Congress under Section 5(a), or through federal agency-initiated study under Section 5(d) (1). By the end of 2002, Congress had authorized 138 rivers for study. Section 5(d) (1) directs federal agencies to consider the potential of wild and scenic rivers in their planning processes; and its application has resulted in numerous individual river designations and state and area-specific legislation.

Both Sections 5(a) and 5(d) (1) require determinations to be made regarding a river's eligibility, classification, and suitability. Eligibility and classification represent an inventory of existing conditions. Eligibility is an evaluation of whether a river is free-flowing and possesses one or more outstandingly remarkable value. If found eligible, a river is analyzed as to its current level of development and a preliminary classification determination is made as to whether it should be placed into one of three classes; wild, scenic, or recreational.

The final procedural step, a suitability study, provides the basis for determining whether to recommend a river as part of the National System. A suitability study is designed to answer the following questions:

- Should the river's free-flowing character, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values be protected; or are one or more other uses important enough to warrant doing otherwise?
- Will the river's free-flowing character, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values be protected through designation? Is it the best method for protecting the river corridor? In answering these questions, the benefits and impacts of Wild and Scenic River designation must be evaluated and alternative protection methods considered.
- Is there a demonstrated commitment to protect the river by any non-federal entities that may be partially responsible for implementing protective management?

Rivers authorized for suitability studies by Congress are protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act; specifically, Sections 7(b) – prevents the harmful effects of water resources projects; 8(b) – withdraws public lands from disposition under public land laws; 9(b) – withdraws

locatable minerals from appropriation under mining laws; and 12(a) – directs actions of other federal agencies to protect river values. These protections last through the suitability study process, including a three-year period following transmittal of the final suitability study report by the President to Congress. The integrity of the identified classification must also be maintained during the protection period.

The identification of a river as eligible through the forest planning process does not trigger any protections under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. To manage the river for its potential inclusion into the National System, other authorities are cited to protect its free-flowing character, water quality, outstandingly remarkable values, and preliminary or recommended classification.

No suitability studies are being conducted with this Forest Plan revision.

In this evaluation, only eligibility of rivers on the KNF is completed. Suitability is deferred, pending:

- Public interest or support in wild and scenic river study;
- Congress expresses interest in a specific river for wild and scenic river designation; or
- A proposed project would alter the free-flowing character of a stream, such as by impoundment, or adversely affect outstandingly remarkable values, or the river's inventoried classification.

### *Legal and Administrative Framework*

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (30 Stat. 11, as amended; 16 U.S.C. § 473 et seq.):** This act provides the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to regulate the occupancy and use of NFS lands.
- **Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of June 12, 1960 (P.L. 86-517, 74 Stat.215):** This act provides direction to the NFS lands to provide access and recreation opportunities. The act states, “The policy of Congress is that national forests are established and administered for outdoor recreation...”
- **Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of October 2, 1968 (P.L. 90-542, Stat. 906, as amended; 16 U.S.C. § 1271(note), 1271-1287):** This act established a policy for preserving selected rivers or sections thereof in a free-flowing condition. The intent was to protect water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation measures that would balance the development of water, power, and other resources for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.
- **Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (P.L. 94-579, 90 Stat. 2742, as amended):** This act declares (per Sec. 102) that “...the public lands be managed in a manner that...will provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use.”
- **National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of October 22, 1976 (P.L. 94-588, 90 Stat. 2949; 16 U.S.C. § 1600 et seq.):** The act requires the Forest Service to establish a comprehensive system of land and resource planning, including the development and maintenance of a comprehensive and detailed inventory of lands and resources. The act also specifies the use of a systematic interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of the physical sciences into planning for the management and use of NFS lands and resources.

### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

- **36 CFR 297** – Wild and Scenic Rivers

### Key Indicator

- Miles of eligible, wild, and scenic or recreational rivers.

### Analysis Area

The analysis area for wild, scenic, and recreational rivers is the named rivers and streams on the KNF.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

#### *Inventory*

The wild and scenic river study process requires determination to be made regarding a river's eligibility, classification, and suitability. Eligibility and classification represent an inventory of existing conditions. Eligibility is an evaluation of whether a river is free-flowing (without major dams, diversions, or channel modifications) and possesses one or more outstandingly remarkable values. These values should be a unique or exceptional representation for the area studied and must be related to the river or its immediate environment.

As per the Wild and Scenic River Act at 5(d) (1) and Forest Service Manual policy (FSM 1924.03) a systematic inventory of named streams and rivers was completed for the KNF. The inventory of the named rivers and streams on the KNF was accomplished by using the current GIS databases for rivers and streams on the Forest.

The Forest then determined which of the named rivers and streams were free-flowing. This determination was made by answering the question; "Is the river segment flowing in a natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip rapping, or other modification of the waterway"? If the river segment was not free-flowing, then the river was not eligible.

The next step was to identify potential eligibility by determining which of the named rivers and streams that are free-flowing might have a potential 'outstandingly remarkable value'.

#### *Eligibility*

To be eligible for designation, a river must be free-flowing and possess one or more outstandingly remarkable value. Thus, the eligibility analysis consisted of an examination of the river's hydrology, including any man made alterations, and an assessment of its natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

In order to be assessed as outstandingly remarkable, a river-related value must be a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale. Dictionary definitions of the words "unique" and "rare" indicate that such a value would be one that is a conspicuous example from among a number of similar values that are themselves uncommon or extraordinary. Only one such value is needed for eligibility.

The area, region, or scale of comparison is not fixed, and is defined as that which serves as a basis for meaningful comparative analysis; it may vary depending on the value being considered. Typically, a "region" is defined on the scale of an administrative unit, a portion of a state, or an appropriately scaled physiographic or hydrologic unit. The comparative scale used for this



assessment is the individual forest. That is, the rivers and streams on the KNF were compared one to another.

While the spectrum of resources that may be considered is broad, all values should be directly river-related. That is, they should:

- Be located in the river or on its immediate shore-lands (generally within 1/4 mile on either side of the river);
- Contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem; and/or
- Owe their location or existence to the presence of the river.

Using the Forest as the comparative scale, the KNF then reviewed the identified potential ‘outstandingly remarkable values’ and determined whether they meet the criteria of being rare, unique, or exemplary. After reviewing the initial assessments a determination was made as to whether the potential outstandingly remarkable value(s) is a unique, rare, or exemplary feature that is significant at the selected comparative scale and meets the other criteria for being directly river-related (as described above) to be considered eligible for wild and scenic river study.

Narratives were developed for each river found to be potentially eligible, clarifying the outstandingly remarkable values that were unique, rare, and exemplary. The outstandingly remarkable values were then summarized over the entire river system.

### *Classification*

The potential classification of a river found to be eligible is based on the condition of the river and the adjacent lands as they currently exist. Section 2(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968) specifies and defines these terms as follows:

- **Wild Rivers:** Rivers or sections of rivers free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.
- **Scenic Rivers:** Rivers or sections of rivers free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.
- **Recreational Rivers:** Rivers or sections of rivers readily accessible by roads or railroad, which may have some development along their shoreline and which may have undergone some impoundments or diversions in the past.

For more information on how the inventory was conducted, the values considered, and classification, see appendix E of the FEIS.

### **Changes between Draft and Final**

Based on public comment, the inventory of potentially eligible wild and scenic rivers was reviewed and changes made to eligible rivers for Alternative B Modified. Under this alternative, the Grave Creek and Quartz Creek systems are no longer considered eligible as wild and scenic rivers.

Updates have been made to the outstandingly remarkable values in tables 122 and 123 and acres and miles adjusted to match the latest GIS data. Narratives were developed for each eligible river system based on the inventoried outstandingly remarkable values. Information was summarized for the entire river system and only those values that were identified as rare, unique, and exemplary in the narrative have been brought forward as the “outstandingly remarkable values” listed in these tables. These narratives are included in appendix E.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

The 1987 Forest Plan initially identified four rivers that appeared to be eligible for consideration per the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act: the Yaak, Kootenai, Bull, and Vermilion Rivers. While there was no specific MA assigned to wild and scenic rivers under the 1987 Forest Plan, these areas were “protected to maintain the characteristics which led to their existing status” (1987 Plan, p. II-27).

The 1987 Forest Plan was amended in February 1989 and October 1989 to include additional section and tributaries of the Bull River and Big Creek and additional management standards.

As per the Wild and Scenic River Act at 5(d) (1) and Forest Service Manual policy (FSM 1924.03), a systematic inventory has been completed on the KNF. The inventory of named rivers and streams on the KNF resulted in the identification of 752 candidates to consider for eligibility: Libby District (206), Cabinet District (180), Three Rivers District (189), Rexford District (84), and Fortine District (93). An assessment of these 752 candidates was conducted to identify any potential outstandingly remarkable values and their free-flowing characteristics. As a result of this assessment, it was determined that there are additional rivers and streams eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. These additional rivers are summarized in table 123.

The 1987 KNF Forest Plan did not contain any monitoring items in relation to eligible, suitable, or designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. During the life of the Plan, no suitability studies were conducted on any of the eligible rivers.

To this end, projects were designed and implemented so the identified outstandingly remarkable values would not be compromised, until such time as a suitability study could be conducted. As a result, the free-flowing characteristic of all eligible rivers has been maintained. In addition, management actions taken to comply with state water quality goals and INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995) direction have resulted in the protection of those rivers and streams where fisheries were the identified outstandingly remarkable value.

Table 122 summarizes the eligible rivers that were included in the 1987 KNF Forest Plan subsequent to 1989 Forest Plan amendments. Figure 37 displays their location (use the map code listed in table 122 as a reference to figure 37).

**Table 122. Summary of Eligible Rivers on the KNF (1987 Forest Plan)**

River/Segment(s)	Map Code	Outstandingly Remarkable Value(s)	Length on all Lands (miles)	Length on NFS Lands (miles)	Preliminary Classification	Acres(on NFS lands)
Kootenai River						
S - 1	K1	Scenery, Fisheries, Recreation, and History	9.3	1.3	Recreational	737
S - 2	K2		10.1	1.9	Recreational	363
S - 3	K3		8.8	5.0	Recreational	2,299
S - 4	K4		10.3	0.5	Recreational	237
S - 5	K5		8.7	6.7	Recreational	2,308
Yaak River						
S - 1	Y1	Scenery, Recreation,	19.1	3.5	Recreational	1,842
S - 2	Y2		9.8	7.1	Recreational	2,734

River/Segment(s)	Map Code	Outstandingly Remarkable Value(s)	Length on all Lands (miles)	Length on NFS Lands (miles)	Preliminary Classification	Acres(on NFS lands)
S - 3	Y3	and History	11.4	6.2	Recreational	2,068
S - 4	Y4		9.3	9.0	Wild	2,586
Bull River System						
S - 1 (Bull River)	B1	Scenery	11.3	5.7	Recreational	1,911
S - 2 (Bull River)	B2		9.1	3.4	Recreational	1,608
S - 3 (N. Fork & Middle Forks of Bull River)	B3		17.4	12.6	Wild	4,135
S - 4 (E Fork Bull River)	B4		4.5	4.1	Recreational	1,119
S - 5 (E Fork Bull River)	B5		3.0	3.0	Wild	997
Big Creek System						
S - 1 (Big Creek)	BC1	Recreation	7.6	7.6	Recreational	2,261
S - 2 (S Fork Big Creek)	BC2		6.7	6.7	Recreational	2,103
S - 3 (Little N F Big Creek)	BC3		1.6	1.6	Wild	452
S - 4 (Good Creek)	BC4		2.4	2.4	Wild	717
S - 5 (NF Big Creek)	BC5		5.6	5.6	Wild	1,797
S - 6 (Copeland Creek)	BC6		1.8	1.8	Wild	564
S - 7 (Lookout Creek)	BC7		2.4	2.4	Wild	725
S - 7 (EF Lookout Creek)	BC7		1.5	1.5	Wild	443
S - 7 (Lookout Creek Trib)	BC7		1.7	1.7	Wild	515
Vermilion River						
S - 1	V1	Scenery and History	13.2	11.1	Recreational	3,599
Total			186.1	112.4		38,120

## Environmental Consequences

### General Effects

#### Alternative A — No-action Alternative

Under Alternative A there would be no new river miles identified as eligible on the KNF. The 1987 ROD and amended Plan identified approximately 112.4 miles of rivers on NFS land (and the associated corridors containing about 38,120 acres) on the KNF as eligible for study as additions to the National Wild and Scenic River system (see table 122)

### Alternatives B Modified, C, and D

For the FEIS, the eligible rivers differed by alternative, addressing a range of management options.

In addition to the existing eligible rivers identified in the 1987 ROD and subsequent amendments, Alternatives C and D identify approximately 60 additional miles of river on NFS land (and the associated corridors containing about 18,300 acres) as eligible for study as additions to the National Wild and Scenic River System (see table 123 below).

In addition to the existing eligible rivers identified in the 1987 ROD and subsequent amendments, Alternative B Modified includes the same additional eligible rivers as Alternatives C and D with the exception of the Grave Creek and Quartz Creek Systems. Review of these creek systems between draft and final found the outstandingly remarkable values for most segments were bull trout and sensitive plants. The presence of these features are not necessarily “rare, unique, or exemplary” across the KNF, with bull trout and sensitive plants found on many creeks and rivers throughout the Forest. Critical habitat for bull trout and occurrence of sensitive plants are protected regardless of management area designation. Alternative B Modified has 17 additional miles of river (and the associated corridors containing 5,300 acres) as eligible for study as additions to the National Wild and Scenic River System (see table 123 below).

Table 123 summarizes the additional eligible rivers by alternative. Figure 37 displays their location (use the map code listed in table 123 as a reference to figure 37).

**Table 123. KNF Rivers Identified During Plan Revision as Eligible to Add to the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River System by Alternative**

Alt	River/Segments(s)	Map Code	Outstandingly Remarkable Value(s)	Length on all Lands (miles)	Length on NFS Lands (miles)	Preliminary Classification	Acres (on NFS Lands)
	Bull River System						
B Mod, C, D	S - 6 (N.F. of the E. Fork Bull River)	B6	Scenery	2.2	2.2	Recreational	616
B Mod, C, D	S - 7 (N.F. of the E. Fork Bull River)	B7		1.4	1.4	Wild	497
	Grave Creek System						
C,D	S - 1 (Grave Creek)	GC1	Fisheries	13.0	12.5	Recreational	3,699
C,D	S - 2 (Stahl Creek)	GC2		4.3	4.3	Recreational	1,244
C,D	S - 3 (Clarence Creek)	GC3		5.2	5.2	Recreational	1,654
C,D	S - 4 (Blue Sky Creek)	GC4		6.3	6.3	Recreational	2,002
	Quartz Creek System						
C,D	S - 1 (Quartz Creek)	QC1	Fisheries and Botany	9.5	8.4	Recreational	2,572
C,D	S - 2 (West Fork Quartz Creek)	QC2		2.8	2.8	Wild	892
C,D	S - 3 (West Fork Quartz Creek)	QC3		3.1	3.1	Recreational	904

Alt	River/Segments(s)	Map Code	Outstandingly Remarkable Value(s)	Length on all Lands (miles)	Length on NFS Lands (miles)	Preliminary Classification	Acres (on NFS Lands)
	Vinal Creek System						
B Mod, C, D	S - 1 (Vinal Creek)	VC1	Scenery and Recreation	4.1	3.9	Scenic	1,074
B Mod, C, D	S - 2 (Turner Creek)	VC2		1.0	1.1	Scenic	386
	West Fork Yaak River						
B Mod, C, D	S - 1	YWF1	Scenery and History	4.3	4.2	Wild	1,330
B Mod, C, D	S - 2	YWF2		5.6	4.5	Recreational	1,428
	Total			62.8	59.9		18,298

Under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D eligible rivers would be allocated to MA2 and would be managed to protect the outstandingly remarkable values for which these rivers are eligible to the National Wild and Scenic River System. This direction would apply to those streams identified as eligible in the existing Plan, as well as the additional river miles identified as eligible for each alternative. Alternative B Modified designates approximately 130 miles of streams on NFS lands (and the associated corridors containing 43,451 acres) as eligible wild and scenic rivers. Alternatives C and D designates approximately 172 miles of streams on NFS lands (and the associated corridors containing 56,418 acres) as eligible wild and scenic rivers.

Figure 37 displays the eligible wild, scenic, and recreational rivers on the Forest. See appendix E for narratives and detailed maps of each eligible wild, scenic, and recreational river.

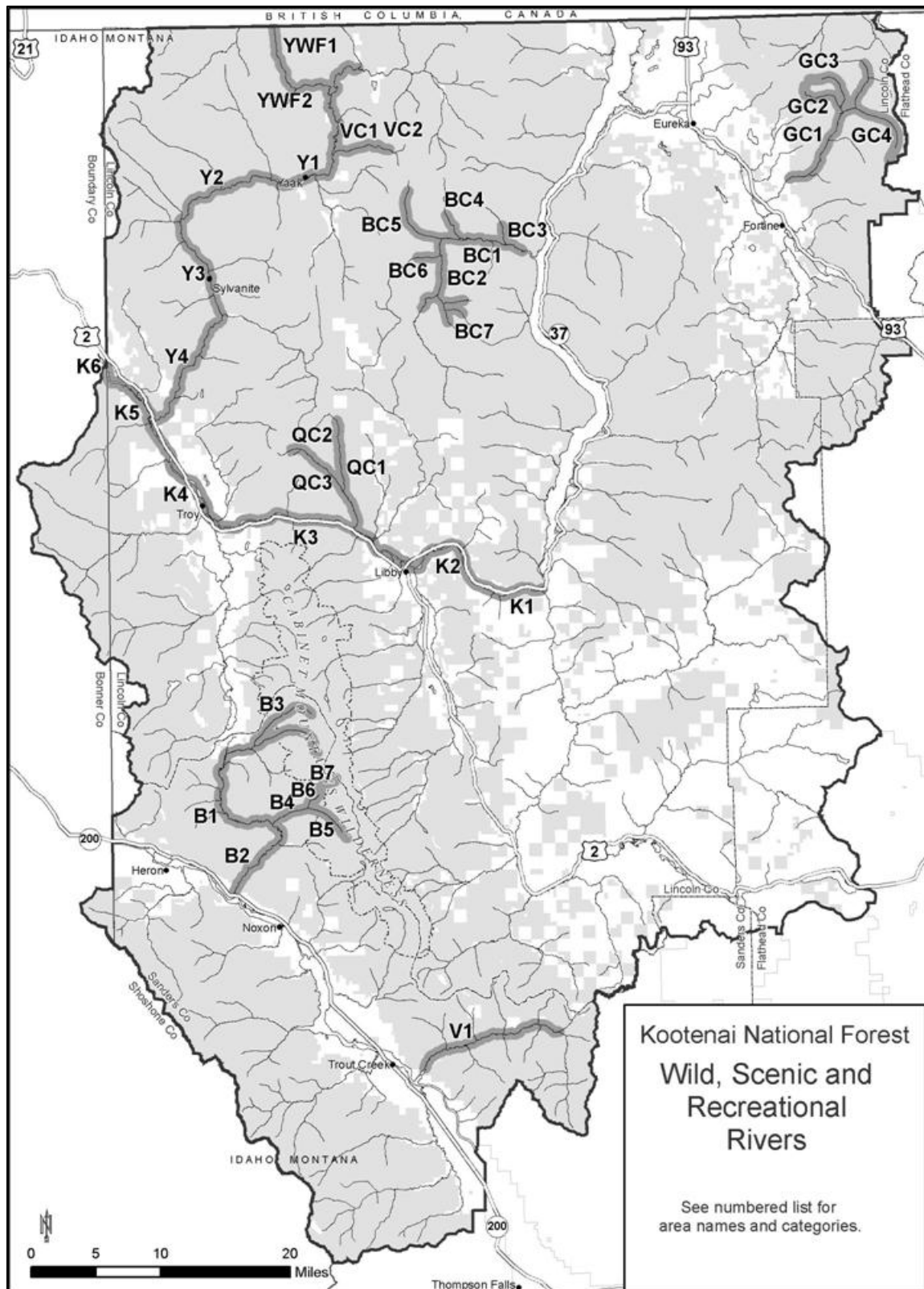


Figure 37. Map of KNF Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreation Rivers

### *Consequences to Wild and Scenic Rivers from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Management Area Prescriptions**

The management area prescription for wild and scenic rivers protects the outstandingly remarkable values for which the river was designated as eligible. More areas are protected as eligible for wild and scenic rivers under Alternatives C and D than under the other alternatives. Alternative B Modified protects those rivers with the highest level of “rare, unique, and exemplary” attributes. Alternative A protects the least amount of rivers as eligible for wild and scenic rivers.

#### **Effects from Vegetation Management**

Although all river corridors are removed from calculation of the ASQ, trees could be harvested in eligible river corridors classified as scenic or recreational if it is to maintain or restore the values for which the scenic or recreational river was identified. Within river segments classified as wild, vegetation restoration projects may occur if the need is linked to human-induced changes and are necessary for the recovery of threatened and endangered species or native ecological communities. Trees would be cut only if they do not alter the recreation characteristics of the land and physical resources; and do not affect the eligibility, classification, or potential suitability of the area.

#### **Effects from Recreation Management**

Impacts from recreational use and management within eligible river segments are anticipated to be low. Although river corridors may be used for camping, canoeing, hiking, and other activities, the impacts can be expected to be minimal since they are generally low intensity. In order to provide an essentially primitive character, eligible segments classified as wild would not likely have any recreation development occur. In segments classified as scenic or recreational, recreation development would be allowed but only when it would preserve the identified river values. Trail maintenance work can be expected to have little if any impact in the river corridors.

#### **Effects from Fire and Fuels Management**

Both natural, unplanned ignitions and prescribed fires are allowed to be used as a tool to maintain ecological conditions within river corridors. These burns could affect scenery in the short-term, but should contribute to meeting long-term scenic objectives and desired future conditions of the MA.

#### **Effects from Minerals Management**

Anticipated effects from minerals management would be low in all alternatives. Potential for leasable minerals is low across most of the Forest and currently there are no permits or operating plans for exploration within the corridors. Although potential for locatable minerals does exist, there are no current permits or operating plans for mineral exploration within the corridors. Mineral materials are present and could potentially be used for construction purposes but generally proposals for development of mineral materials do not occur and this would be at the discretion of the Forest Service. Eligible segments classified as wild would not be available for mineral material development.

#### **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects evaluate the potential impacts to Wild and Scenic Rivers from the alternatives when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The lands within the

KNF boundary, and the named rivers and streams contained therein, form the geographic scope for cumulative effects. The temporal bound would be the life of the Forest Plan which is estimated to be a 15 year time span.

In order to integrate the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives, existing conditions are used as a proxy for the impacts of past actions. This is because existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior actions that have affected Wild and Scenic Rivers and might contribute to cumulative effects. On those rivers (e.g., Kootenai River, Yaak River, and Bull River) which predominantly flow through lands other than NFS lands, there has been continual development on private property. Water-related activities such as fishing, rafting, kayaking, and similar uses are expanding as the population in the nearby urban areas increases and access points are developed.

On rivers that predominantly flow through NFS lands, there has been a steady increase in water-related activities such as fishing, rafting, canoeing, and kayaking, mostly at dispersed sites. An exception to this would be those river sections that do not contain road access.

Management activities generally take place outside of eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers unless an action is needed to help protect or preserve the identified unique feature or characteristic. For example, if invasive weeds were discovered in an eligible river corridor there may be a need to take some action (hand pull, herbicide application) to eradicate or prevent further spread.



## Research Natural Areas

### Introduction

Research natural areas (RNAs) are permanently established to maintain areas of natural ecosystems and areas of special ecological significance. These protective designations attempt to maintain natural ecosystem components and processes and are cooperatively identified and managed with the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station. These areas form a long-term network of ecological reserves established as baseline areas for non-manipulative research, education, and the maintenance of biodiversity. Most of these areas on the KNF would protect examples of late-seral or climax conditions. They are administratively designated by the regional forester with station director concurrence.

### *RNAs Serve Three Important Functions:*

- **Reference Areas** – RNAs serve as benchmarks for monitoring and evaluating the sustainability and impacts of land management practices on lands with similar ecosystems. To determine the impact of management on an area it is useful to have, as a control, a similar area maintained in natural condition for comparison. RNAs contribute to ecosystem management by providing these controls.
- **Biological Diversity** – RNAs provide protection for biological diversity. A representative RNA system provides some degree of assurance that a wide array of plant and animal species will be afforded a high degree of protection in the future. This protection may be most important for soil microorganisms, fungi, insects, and other forms of biological diversity on which ecosystems often depend the most, but about which we know the least. RNAs also can be selected to help protect specific populations of threatened, endangered, and/or sensitive species.
- **Research** – RNAs provide sites for research into how ecosystems function, particularly in areas in which ecological and evolutionary processes are functioning in a relatively natural state. They serve as sites for monitoring long-term change in ecosystems such as global climate change and shifting patterns in the landscape that result from such disturbances as fire, floods, and insect epidemics. Research projects in an identified RNA can greatly increase our understanding of particular ecosystems and improve the quality of ecosystem management. RNAs also serve an important educational function by providing excellent examples of ecosystems in a relatively natural condition, with functioning ecological processes.

### Legal and Administrative Framework

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (16 U.S.C. 477-482, 551):** This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to issue rules and regulations for the occupancy and use of the national forests.

### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

The following regulations provide direction for RNA establishment and management on NFS lands:

- **36 CFR 219 – Planning**
  - **219.25 Special Designations:** States that forest planning shall provide for the establishment of RNAs. To be identified as examples of important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic, and geologic types that have special or unique characteristics of scientific interest and importance and that are needed to complete the national RNA network.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

Kootenai National Forest resource specialists and research scientists, along with the Rocky Mountain Research Station, have identified NFS lands on the KNF that possess ecological characteristics that make them desirable for RNA establishment. The revised Forest Plan would designate three additional RNAs in addition to the eight established RNAs already on the KNF.

### Changes between Draft and Final

Following field review, the boundaries of two proposed RNAs were adjusted and increased in size. The boundary adjustments were to improve management, make them locatable on the ground, and protect additional areas of whitebark pine (a sensitive species). The Huson Peak RNA increased 984 acres and the Seven Point Genetical RNA increased 399 acres. These changes in boundaries were made to Alternative B Modified.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

There are currently eight established RNAs on the KNF (table 124 below). The 1987 KNF ROD proposed eight RNAs for possible establishment. These eight RNAs totaled approximately 3,140 acres when the ROD was issued in 1987. All eight RNAs have been officially established since the ROD was signed. Most of the eight RNAs had boundaries modified and refined when they were officially established and now total approximately 5,210 acres. See appendix F for a description of these areas and detailed maps.

**Table 124. Established Research Natural Areas on the KNF**

RNA Name	District	Established (Acres)
Big Creek	Rexford	178
Hoskins Lake	Three Rivers	376
LeBeau	Fortine	411
Lower Ross Creek	Three Rivers	1,874
Norman Parmenter	Libby	1,289
Pete Creek Meadows	Three Rivers	153
Ulm Peak	Cabinet	689
Wolf Weigel	Libby	240
<b>Total Acres</b>		<b>5,210</b>

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

#### **Alternative A — No-action Alternative**

This alternative reflects the 1987 Forest Plan, as amended. Under Alternative A, eight areas, encompassing 5,210 acres would continue to be managed as RNAs. These areas represent examples of late-successional plant communities, or pristine examples of plant communities that are relatively rare; or unusual complexes of plant communities in very good condition. RNAs are managed under MA21 of the 1987 Forest Plan. This MA provides specific direction for the management of these areas for non-manipulative research, observation, and study. This MA also precludes management activities such as timber harvest (except as identified in research plans) and road construction.

#### **Alternatives B Modified, C, and D**

Alternatives B Modified, C, and D retain all existing RNAs. In addition, Alternative B Modified would add three new RNAs, resulting in an increase of approximately 4,609 acres managed as RNAs. Alternatives C and D would also add three new RNAs, but two of them would be smaller, resulting in an increase of 3,226 acres managed as RNAs. See table 125 for a summary of proposed RNAs and acreages by alternative. These areas, along with the existing RNAs, are allocated to MA4.

**Table 125. Proposed Research Natural Areas on the KNF**

RNA Name	District	Alt B Modified Proposed Acres	Alt C and D Proposed Acres
Doonan Peak	Three Rivers	504	504
Huson Peak	Libby	1,715	731
Seven Point Genetical	Cabinet	2,390	1,991
<b>Total Additional Acres</b>		<b>4,609</b>	<b>3,226</b>

### *Proposed Research Natural Area Descriptions*

Following is a brief description of each of the proposed RNAs. See appendix F for detailed maps of each area.

**Doonan Peak:** The area contains hybrids of a cross between western larch and alpine larch. It is known as hybrid larch. This site has an extensive, well-developed distributional overlap of western larch and alpine larch and their natural hybrids. Trees of all three taxa are present in both old growth and young age classes. It is the largest known concentration of hybrid larch in northwestern Montana. After the St. Mary's area in the Bitterroot Valley, it is the most extensive natural hybridization zone of western larch and alpine larch. The site also contains a tree that is nominated for the Montana Champion Tree Program for alpine larch. The proposed RNA is located adjacent to the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness. The area is in a rugged glacial cirque having a steep headwall with talus slopes and an adjacent subalpine ridge.

**Huson Peak:** The area contains a viable stand of whitebark pine. This stand is an historic representation of the species for western Montana and northern Idaho. The site is used for collecting seed for a breeding program to determine genetic resistance of the species to white pine blister rust. It is not known if these trees contain any rust resistance, but they are alive and

well, while many of the stands in the area have been killed by the rust. The stands are generally located above 5,800 feet elevation.

**Seven Point Genetical:** The area contains a viable stand of whitebark pine. This stand is an historic representation of the species for western Montana and northern Idaho. The site is used for collecting seed for a breeding program to determine genetic resistance of the species to white pine blister rust. It is not known if these trees contain any rust resistance, but they are alive and well, while many of the stands in the area have been killed by the rust. The stands are generally located above 5,800 feet elevation.

*Consequences to Research Natural Areas from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

**Effects from Management Area Prescriptions**

Management prescriptions in any of the four alternatives would not result in any change in the lands managed as RNAs. Areas allocated to RNAs are substantially free from human activities, although research and educational activities occur. Under special circumstances, deliberate manipulation may be used to maintain or re-establish ecological processes within an RNA (i.e., if approved in the RNA management plan or establishment record); otherwise most activities are precluded in RNAs.

**Effects from Access Management**

Currently there are no roads in the existing designated RNAs. The action alternatives would restrict new road construction on an additional 4,609 acres (Alternative B Modified) or 3,226 acres (Alternatives C and D) under MA4-STD-AR-02. In addition, MA4 includes MA4-GDL-AR-02 which allows mechanized use (e.g., mountain bikes and other non-motorized, wheeled vehicles) only on NFS routes. These standards and guidelines would protect the natural processes within the RNAs.

**Effects from Vegetation Management**

MA21 (Alternative A) and MA4 (Alternatives B Modified, C, and D) allow timber harvest only if it is identified in the RNA Establishment Record or approved RNA management plan. These MAs are not part of the suited timber base. Under special circumstances, deliberate manipulation may be used to maintain or re-establish ecological processes within an RNA as allowed within the RNA Establishment Record or approved RNA management plan. Any activity would be designed to meet RNA management objectives.

**Effects from Wildlife Management**

All alternatives preclude activities that are not allowed by the RNA management plan; therefore, wildlife management in these areas would not occur and would not affect RNAs.

**Effects from Aquatic Management**

All alternatives preclude activities that are not allowed by the RNA management plan; therefore, aquatic management in these areas would not occur and would not affect RNAs.

**Effects from Recreation Management**

All alternatives preclude activities that are not allowed by the RNA management plan; therefore, recreation management in these areas would be limited to non-motorized recreation and

mechanized use is limited to established trails. These limited recreation activities would not result in any change in the lands proposed as RNAs.

#### **Effects from Fire and Fuels Management**

Planned ignitions or the use of unplanned ignitions may be allowed, as described within the RNA Establishment Record or approved RNA management plan. Fire would only be allowed if it would maintain or re-establish ecological processes within RNAs.

#### **Effects from Lands and Special Uses Management**

All alternatives preclude activities that are not allowed by the RNA management plan; therefore, lands and special use management would not occur and would not affect RNAs.

#### **Cumulative Effects**

Management activities generally take place outside of established or proposed RNAs unless an action is needed to help protect or preserve the identified ecological characteristics. For example, if invasive weeds were discovered in an RNA there may be a need to take some action (hand pull, herbicide application) to eradicate or prevent further spread. However, this activity, or any management activity, would have to be identified in the RNA Establishment Record or approved RNA management plan or analyzed at the site-specific level.

Vegetation treatments are likely to continue. It is not expected that vegetation management activities resulting from any of the four alternatives would likely result in any change to established or proposed RNAs since vegetation treatments take place outside of RNAs. Any vegetative treatment within RNAs would be analyzed at the site-specific level and be identified in the RNA Establishment Record or approved RNA management plan.

Wildlife management activities can be expected to continue but are not likely to result in any change to established or proposed RNAs since wildlife management activities occur outside of RNAs.

Watershed improvement activities are likely to continue. It is unlikely that any aquatic management activities resulting from any of the four alternatives would likely result in any change to established or proposed RNAs since watershed improvement activities generally take place outside of RNAs.

Recreation management activities such as trail maintenance can be expected to continue but are not likely to have any effect on any established or proposed RNAs.

Fuels management activities (e.g., prescribed burning) are likely to continue. It is unlikely that fire and fuels management activities would likely result in any change to established or proposed RNAs since fuels management activities generally take place outside of RNAs.

## *Special Areas*

### **Introduction**

The areas discussed in this section are comprised of the Special Area classifications listed below. Special Areas are protected and managed for public use and enjoyment. These areas are identified due to their unique or special characteristics. Special Areas are ‘suitable areas of national forest land, other than wilderness or wild areas, which should be managed principally for recreation use’ (36 CFR 294.1). These areas are not congressionally designated, but are administratively designated by the Chief of the Forest Service, regional forester, or forest supervisor (FSM 2372).

The following are Special Area classifications, depending on their special characteristics or unique value(s):

1. Scenic Area – a unit of land with outstanding natural beauty that requires special management to preserve this beauty.
2. Geological Area – a unit of land with outstanding formations or unique geological features of the earth's development such as caves, fossils, dikes, cliffs, or faults.
3. Botanical Area – a unit of land that contains plant specimens, plant groups, or plant communities that are significant because of their form, color, occurrence, habitat, location, life history, arrangement, ecology, rarity, or other features.
4. Zoological Area – a unit of land that contains animal specimens, animal groups, or animal communities that are significant because of their occurrence, habitat, location, life history, ecology, rarity, or other features.
5. Paleontological Areas – a unit of land that contains fossils of plants and animals, shellfish, early vertebrates, coal swamp forests, early reptiles, dinosaurs, and other prehistoric plants or animals.
6. Historical Area – a unit of land possessing a significant site or a concentration of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or prehistorically by plan or physical development. Memorial areas are included in this definition.
7. Recreational Area – a unit of land that has been administratively designated for particular recreation opportunities or activities such as hiking, rock hounding, recreational mining, photography, or other special activity.

The KNF did not identify any special areas that were classified as “paleontological.”

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (16 U.S.C. 477-482, 551):** This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to issue rules and regulations for the occupancy and use of the national forests.

### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

The following regulations provide direction for Special Area designation and management on NFS lands:

- **36 CFR 219** – Planning
  - Subpart A: National Forest Land and Resource Management Planning
- **36 CFR 294** – Special Areas
  - Subpart A: Miscellaneous Provisions
  - Subpart B: State Petitions for Inventoried Roadless Area Management
  - Subpart C: Idaho Roadless Area Management

### Key Indicator

- Acres of NFS lands recommended for designation as Special Areas.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

Resource specialists across the Forest, through field data collection and inventory work, identified NFS lands that possess ‘Special Area’ characteristics and submitted them to be recommended for designation.

For the purposes of this analysis, the total acres of all recommended areas is calculated for each alternative and compared. This includes new areas as well as the expansion of some of the existing special areas. See appendix F for more information on the process used to identify these areas.

### Analysis Area

The analysis area is the NFS lands administered by the KNF.

### Changes between Draft and Final

The Affected Environment has been updated to correct the omission of the Devil Gap Special Area, which was designated under the 1987 Forest Plan. It was also updated to explain why Boyd Mill is no longer designated as a special area.

All alternatives were updated to remove the traditional cultural (a subset of historical) special areas. These areas will be managed separate, outside of the forest plan.

Based on public comment, the existing Devil Gap Special Area was added to Alternative B Modified. Also based on public comment, four new special areas were added to Alternative B Modified: 494 Road Bedrock Meadow, East Fork Bull River, Hamilton Gorge, and Swamp Mountain Meadows. These areas have special characteristics and meet the intent of special area designation. See appendix F for a description of these areas.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

The 1987 Forest Plan as amended included 15 special areas. One of these areas, Boyd Mill, is no longer designated as a special area. Most of this area is a cemetery, which was transferred to the county. The remaining 14 special areas encompass 17,659 acres (see table 126). Descriptions and maps of these special areas are included in appendix F.

The Proposed Plan that was released in 2006 identified 35 established special areas on the KNF. Subsequent review of the special areas found that 20 of the 35 had not been designated following Forest Service direction. The 14 special areas listed in table 126, plus Boyd Mill which is no longer a special area, were designated by the regional forester either prior to the 1987 Plan, or through the decision on the 1987 Plan and subsequent amendments. The 20 that had not been formally designated were then reviewed in the action alternatives for possible recommendation.

**Table 126. Designated Special Areas on the KNF**

Name	District	Existing (Acres)	Classification
Berray Cedars	Cabinet	86	Botanical
Devil Gap	Cabinet	831	Geological
Hidden Lake	Fortine	607	Botanical
Kootenai Falls	Three Rivers/Libby	420	Historical
Lower West Fork Yaak Falls	Three Rivers	274	Geological
Northwest Peak Scenic Area	Three Rivers	4,714	Scenic
Rexford Hoodoos	Rexford	76	Geological
Ross Creek Scenic Area	Three Rivers	101	Scenic
Star Canyon	Three Rivers	81	Geological
Ten Lakes Scenic Area	Fortine	6,542	Scenic
Tenmile Talus	Rexford	390	Geological
Upper Big Creek Riparian Ecosystem	Rexford/Libby	2,966	Botanical
Wood Creek Larch Scenic Area	Three Rivers	115	Scenic
Yahk Mining District	Three Rivers	456	Historical
<b>Total Acres</b>		<b>17,659</b>	

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

#### **Alternative A — No-action Alternative**

As opposed to the action alternatives, this alternative does not designate any new or expand any existing special areas. The 14 existing special areas listed above in table 126 would continue to be managed to enhance and/or protect the unique resources and values for which they were previously designated. These areas total approximately 17,659 acres. Except for areas overlapping with RNAs or the WSA, these areas are allocated to MA21 in the 1987 Forest Plan.

#### **Alternatives B Modified, C, and D**

Alternatives B Modified, C, and D retain all existing special areas. The one exception to retaining all existing special areas is the removal of Devil Gap under Alternatives C and D. This special area was dropped under the action alternatives in the DEIS because the area was not as unique or special as other geologic areas on the Forest. Based on public comment, this area has been added back into Alternative B Modified, reflecting the retention of all existing special areas under this alternative.



Alternatives B Modified, C, and D designate additional special areas and expand the size of some of the special areas that were previously established. See table 127 for a listing of recommended areas for Alternatives B Modified, C, and D.

Under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D, two existing areas are recommended to be expanded. The Northwest Peaks Scenic Area would be increased by 8,534 acres and the Ten Lakes Scenic Area increased 8,403 acres. These expansions would be made to include the adjacent acreages that have high scenic value and improve manageability of the existing special areas. See appendix F for more information on these two proposed expansions.

Under Alternative B Modified, 36 new special areas are recommended, totaling 13,699 acres. Alternatives C and D will recommend 32 new special areas, totaling 13,366. The additional 4 areas under Alternative B Modified were added based on public comment on the DEIS. The 4 areas were found to be unique and of special value to be added to Alternative B Modified. See appendix F for more information on all recommended special areas.

The existing and additional areas and acreages recommended as special areas are allocated to MA3. This MA provides direction to ensure these areas are managed for public use and enjoyment and to protect their unique or special characteristics.

**Table 127. Recommended Special Areas by Alternative**

Name	Alternative	Recommended (Acres)	Classification
494 Road Bedrock Meadow	B Mod	35	Botanical
Bad Medicine	B Mod, C, D	1,938	Zoological
Barnum Wetland	B Mod, C, D	227	Botanical
Barron Creek	B Mod, C, D	326	Historical
Bitterroot Point	B Mod, C, D	126	Botanical
Callahan Historic Mining & Logging District	B Mod, C, D	3,262	Historical
Cody Lakes	B Mod, C, D	194	Botanical/Zoological
East Fork Bull River	B Mod	109	Botanical
East Fork Pipe Creek	B Mod, C, D	1,118	Geological
Falls Creek	B Mod, C, D	42	Scenic/Geological
Flower Lake	B Mod, C, D	16	Botanical
French Creek Cedars	B Mod, C, D	131	Botanical
Gateway Prairie	B Mod, C, D	2,147	Botanical
Halverson Face	B Mod, C, D	47	Botanical
Hamilton Gorge	B Mod	144	Geological
Kelsey Creek	B Mod, C, D	53	Botanical
Kenelty Caves	B Mod, C, D	87	Geological
Little North Fork Falls	B Mod, C, D	6	Recreational
Lost Horse Fen	B Mod, C, D	308	Botanical
Lower Sunday Creek Ecosystem	B Mod, C, D	150	Botanical
Northwest Peak Scenic Area	B Mod, C, D	8,534 <sup>1</sup>	Scenic

Name	Alternative	Recommended (Acres)	Classification
Pete Creek	B Mod, C, D	320	Botanical
Pinkham Falls	B Mod, C, D	21	Geological
Rock Creek Meadows	B Mod, C, D	185	Botanical
Rocky Fivemile Forest	B Mod, C, D	215	Botanical
Ross Falls	B Mod, C, D	44	Geological
Spar Springs	B Mod, C, D	196	Geological
Spread Otis Creeks	B Mod, C, D	382	Botanical
Stone Hill	B Mod, C, D	760	Recreational/Geological
Sutton Falls	B Mod, C, D	113	Geological
Swamp Mountain Meadows	B Mod	45	Botanical
Ten Lakes Scenic Area	B Mod, C, D	8,403 <sup>1</sup>	Scenic
Tenmile Falls	B Mod, C, D	187	Geological
Tepee Lake	B Mod, C, D	46	Botanical
Terriault Pass	B Mod, C, D	493	Geological
Vermilion Falls	B Mod, C, D	99	Recreational/Historical
Vinal Lake	B Mod, C, D	83	Botanical
Yaak Falls	B Mod, C, D	44	Historical/Recreational
<b>Total Acres</b>		<b>30,636</b>	

<sup>1</sup> Additional acres to those existing

The 2006 Proposed Plan included additional recommended special areas. These areas were reviewed to see if they would be managed for recreational use while protecting their values. Many of the areas were determined to be protected under revised forest plan direction (for example, protection of fens through a guideline to buffer peatlands, FW-GDL-VEG-09). Furthermore, recreational use is not desired for some of these areas. Characteristics of each area were also reviewed to see if they were special or unique values on the Forest. The remaining areas recommended as special areas met the criteria of recreational use and special characteristics or values.

### *Consequences to Special Areas from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Management Area Prescriptions**

The management area prescription for special areas protects the unique or special values for which the area was identified while providing recreational use. Alternative B Modified recommends the most additional acreage, at 30,636 acres, while Alternatives C and D recommend slightly less, at 30,303 acres. Alternative A does not recommend any additional Special Areas and would not result in any increase.

#### **Effects from Vegetation Management**

Special areas are not suitable for timber production. Timber harvest is allowed in these areas as a tool to maintain or restore the values for which they were determined to be a special area, but do not contribute to the ASQ. Natural ecological processes (e.g., plant succession) and disturbances

(e.g., insects and disease) are the primary forces affecting the composition, structure, and pattern of vegetation within special areas.

#### **Effects from Recreation Management**

Impacts from recreational use and management within Special Areas are anticipated to be low. Hiking and other activities occur, but the impacts can be expected to be minimal since they are generally low intensity. Developed recreation sites are unlikely, although trailhead and sanitation facilities can be expected in scenic and recreational areas. Trail maintenance work can be expected to have little, if any, impact on Special Area characteristics.

#### **Effects from Fire and Fuels Management**

Impacts from fire and fuels management are expected to be low. Prescribed fire, although allowed, is rarely used unless the values for which the area was designated can be maintained or enhanced. Unplanned ignitions would generally be suppressed in botanical, zoological, and historical special areas as the potential risk to the resource from wildfire would be undesirable.

#### **Effects from Minerals Management**

Anticipated effects from minerals management would be low in all alternatives. Potential for leasable minerals is low across most of the Forest and currently there are no permits or operating plans for exploration within any Special Area. Although potential for locatable minerals does exist, there are no current permits or operating plans for mineral exploration within these areas. No impacts would occur from the disposal of mineral materials since it is not an allowed use within Special Areas.

### **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects evaluate the potential impacts to Special Areas from the proposed action and alternatives when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The lands within the KNF boundary form the geographic scope for cumulative effects since this is the scope for the proposed action (Alternative B Modified). The temporal bound would be the life of the Forest Plan which is estimated to be a 15 year time span.

In order to integrate the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives, this analysis uses existing conditions as a proxy for the impacts of past actions. This is because existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior actions that have affected Special Areas and might contribute to cumulative effects.

Management activities generally take place outside of designated Special Areas unless an action is needed to help protect or preserve the identified unique feature or characteristic. For example, if invasive weeds were discovered in a botanical area there may be a need to take some action (hand pull, herbicide application) to eradicate or prevent further spread.

Vegetation treatments are likely to continue. It is not expected that vegetation management activities resulting from any of the four alternatives would result in any change to designated Special Areas since vegetation treatments generally take place outside of designated Special Areas.

Wildlife management activities can be expected to continue but are not likely to result in any change to designated Special Areas since wildlife management activities generally occur outside of designated Special Areas.

Watershed improvement activities are likely to continue. It is unlikely that any aquatic management activities resulting from any of the four alternatives would result in any change to designated Special Areas since watershed improvement activities generally take place outside of designated Special Areas.

Recreation management activities, such as trail maintenance, can be expected to continue but are not likely to have any effect on any designated Special Areas.

Fuels management activities (e.g., prescribed burning) are likely to continue. It is unlikely that fire and fuels management activities would result in any change to designated Special Areas since fuels management activities generally take place outside of designated Special Areas.

Neither the Rock Creek nor Montanore mining proposals, if they were to begin operations, is likely to have an effect on any designated Special Area since these projects occur outside of designated Special Areas.

## Cultural Resources

### Introduction

Historic properties include cultural sites that reflect past use of the area, having value as defined by the National Register of Historic Places (Register) Criteria for Eligibility for their: a) association with important events, b) association with important people in our history, c) distinctive historical or architectural style, and d) potential to provide information about the past. A property can be eligible under one or more of these criteria, and generally are at least 50 years old. Identification of historic properties is completed through field inventory, sites are evaluated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, and a selection of those properties is formally nominated for listing on the Register. Through this process, current and potential impacts to eligible properties are identified and protection measures designed and implemented.

### Legal and Administrative Framework

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (P.L. 89-665, as amended, P.L. 91-423, P.L. 94-422, P.L.94-458 and P.L. 96-515)**
  - **Section 106:** Requires each agency to take into account the effects of its actions on historic properties, prior to approving expenditure of federal funds on an undertaking or prior to issuing any license. Furthermore, an agency must afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (an independent federal agency created by NHPA) an opportunity to comment on any of the agency's undertaking that could affect historic properties.
- **36 CFR 800:** Provides explicit direction for the identification of sites, the determination of project effects on sites, requirements for consultation with state historic preservation offices, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; and how to develop agreements.
 

The Department of Interior has posted guidelines for identifying and nominating traditional cultural properties under the NHPA in Bulletin 38. A traditional cultural property is defined generally as one that is eligible to the National Register because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs of living community that (a) are rooted in that community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community. The Forest Service has issued policy on the interpretation of Bulletin 38. If a property or area being considered for treatment under the provisions of the NHPA does not meet all specified criteria, the Section 106 provisions do not apply. The concerns expressed for designation may be very real and very important; but consideration of any traditional cultural values associated with the area might properly occur under some other mechanism or process, such as NEPA or American Indian Religious Freedom Act.
- **Section 101(a) (8):** Gives the Secretary of Interior (National Park Service) the responsibility and authority to assess "significant threats to properties included in, or eligible for inclusion on, the National Register in order to:
  - (A) Determine the kinds of properties that may be threatened;
  - (B) Ascertain the causes of the threats; and
  - (C) Develop and submit to the President and Congress recommendations for appropriate action."

The Park Service will turn to individual agencies to report such information. This would require a forestwide assessment of known sites, factoring in their present condition, potential for threat, and recommendations for protection.

- **Section 110 (a) (2) (A):** Directs federal agencies to establish "a preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, and protection of historic properties" to "ensure that such properties under the jurisdiction or control of the agency are identified, evaluated, and nominated to the National Register". This would require development of a schedule for the identification, evaluation, and nomination of unrecorded sites.
- **36 CFR 79:** Establishes standards, procedures, and guidelines to be followed by federal agencies to preserve collections of prehistoric and historic material remains and associated records that are recovered in conjunction with federal projects and programs under certain federal statutes. This action should ensure that federally-owned and administered collections of prehistoric and historic materials remains and associated records are deposited in repositories that have the capability to provide adequate long-term curatorial services.
- **36 CFR 60:** Sets forth basic procedures of evaluation and nomination of sites to the National Register of Historic Places, procedures for the operations of state historic preservation officers, and minimum qualification standards for cultural resource professionals.
- **36 CFR 219.24:** Provides guidance for addressing cultural and historic sites in forest plans. Forest planning shall provide for the identification, protection, interpretation, and management of significant cultural resources on NFS lands. Forest planning shall provide an overview of known data relevant to history, ethnography, and prehistory of the area under consideration: including known cultural resource sites; identify areas requiring more intensive inventory; providing for evaluation and identification of appropriate sites for the National Register of Historic Places; providing for establishing measures for the protection of significant cultural resources from vandalism and other human depredation, and natural destruction; identifying the need for maintenance of historic sites on, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places; and identifying opportunities for interpretation of cultural resources for the education and enjoyment of the American Public.
- **Executive Order 11593 of 1971, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment:** States that the federal government will provide leadership on preserving, restoring, and maintaining the historic and cultural environment of the Nation. Directs federal agencies through federal plans and programs to preserve cultural resources, contribute to the preservation and enhancement of non-federally owned sites, structures, and objects of historic, architectural, or archaeological significance. It orders federal agencies to locate, inventory, and nominate to the National Register all properties under their control or jurisdiction that meets the criteria for nomination. It also directs federal agencies to exercise caution during the interim period to ensure cultural resources under their control are not inadvertently damaged, destroyed, or transferred.
- **Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA) P.L. 96-95) and 36 CFR Part 7 Sec 2a:** The Congress finds:
  - (1) Archaeological resources on public lands and Indian lands are an accessible and irreplaceable part of the Nation's heritage;
  - (2) These resources are increasingly endangered because of their commercial attractiveness;

- (3) Existing federal laws do not provide adequate protection to prevent the loss and destruction of these archaeological resources and sites resulting from uncontrolled excavations and pillage; and
- (4) There is a wealth of archaeological information which has been legally obtained by private individuals for noncommercial purposes and which could voluntarily be made available to professional archaeologists and institutions...

The purpose of this section is to provide protection for archaeological resources found on public lands and Indian lands of the United States. The legislation provides civil and criminal penalties for those who remove or damage archaeological resources in violation of the prohibitions contained in the bill. The bill prohibits the removal of archaeological resources on public lands or Indian lands without first obtaining a permit from the affected federal land manager or Indian Tribe.

- **Section 470ii (c):** States that "Each federal land manager shall establish a program to increase public awareness of the significance of the archaeological resources located on public lands and Indian lands and the need to protect such resources." It further directs that an annual report of such progress will be submitted to Congress.
- **Section 470mm:** Directs federal agencies to:
  - (a) Develop plans for surveying lands under their control to determine the nature and extent of archaeological resources on those lands;
  - (b) Prepare a schedule for surveying lands that are likely to contain the most scientifically valuable archaeological resources; and
  - (c) Develop documents for the report of suspected violations of this act and establish when and how those documents are to be completed by officers, employees, and agents of their respective agencies.
- **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) (P.L. 101-601, 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013) and Regulations 43 CFR Part 10:** Addresses the rights of lineal descendants and members of Indian tribes, Alaska Native and native Hawaiian organizations to certain human remains and precisely defined cultural items. It covers items currently in federal repositories as well as future discoveries. The law requires federal agencies and museums to provide an inventory and summary of human remains and associative funerary objects. The law also provides for criminal penalties in the illegal trafficking in Native American human remains and cultural items.
- **Executive Order 13287 of 2000, Preserve America:** Reinforces the federal government policy for "protection and enhancement of America's historic treasures, and to recognize and treat cultural resources as assets. Federal agencies shall advance this policy through the protection of, continued use of, and reinvestment in, the federal government's historic buildings and sites and by conforming to the highest standards of care for, and consideration of, the unique cultural heritage of communities, and of the Nation." Each agency is directed to: (a) review its regulations, management policies, and general operating procedures for compliance with Section 110 of the NHPA, and (b) develop annual goals and measures as part of their compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act (P.L. 103-62) and report annually on the protection of historic and archeological properties within its care. The order also encourages the formation of partnerships with Indian tribes, state and local governments, and the private sector to promote public understanding of the preservation and use of historic properties.
- **Executive Order 13007, 1996 (Indian Sacred Sites):** Directs federal agencies to the extent practicable, accommodate access to and ceremonial use of, sacred sites by Indian religious

practitioners while avoiding adversely affecting the sites and maintaining the confidentiality of the sites.

### Key Indicator

- Effects to eligible historic properties (which can be either no adverse<sup>1</sup> or adverse<sup>2</sup>).

### Methodology and Analysis Process

Analysis methods used for historic properties include a review and synthesis of all pertinent literature, records, and documentation available on the history and prehistory of the Forest. This information includes not only that which is available from a variety of generalized sources, but also information resulting from several years' worth of Forest Service cultural resource inventories. Information of previously documented sites can be an indicator of the type, frequency, and location of sites likely to be found within the analysis area. This cumulative knowledge provides the basis for a prehistoric site probability model.

Alternative A reflects the 1987 Forest Plan, as amended to date, and accounts for current laws and regulations that have evolved since the original Forest Plan and the amendments were adopted. New information on the number of cultural sites will be analyzed through GIS. Output levels will be recalculated for this alternative to comply with these new sources of information. The no-action alternative retains the 1987 Forest Plan goals and objectives, standards, guidelines, and MA prescriptions, as amended. This alternative serves as the baseline for comparison for the other three "action" alternatives.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

Historic properties reflect the prehistoric and historic past. The prehistoric period is that time predating any written history of a people. Through the use of geological, biological, sociological, and archaeological evidence the prehistory of the KNF goes back at least 8,000 years, when people moved across the landscape hunting and gathering. These early people were mobile hunters and gatherers, taking advantage of the wide range of mineral resources here, as well as the varied plant, animal, and aquatic life. Although the lifestyle of these early residents is becoming clearer, there is still much to be learned about the interaction of these people with their environment.

Prehistoric sites can take the form of camps, trails, rock art, cambium-peeled trees, quarries, burial grounds, and others. The Kootenai Indians were the last prehistoric group to inhabit the area. The time of their arrival as well as their origin remains one of the great puzzles of North American prehistory. Their language is unique and distinctive from that of their neighbors. Ethnographic research of the Kootenai tribe was only recently undertaken, beginning in the

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<sup>1</sup> No adverse could include stabilizing a historic property such as controlling erosion of an archaeological site, restoring and maintaining a historic building, or reducing fuels concentrations around a historic property. This kind of treatment is designed and agreed upon through consultation conducted under Section 106 of the NHPA with the State Historic Preservation Officer.

<sup>2</sup> Adverse effects are impacts to the integrity of the property that destroy a portion of or the entire property. A direct adverse impact occurs during the activity itself; such as when a road is built through a historic property and the construction process destroys the site. Indirect adverse impacts are a side effect of the activity or occur after the activity is complete; an example is runoff from a road that eventually erodes a historic property adjacent to it. Adverse impacts can be avoided altogether through project design or mitigated. These avoidance or mitigation measures are agreed to in consultation conducted under Section 106 of NHPA with the State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.



1940s with the work of Turney-High and Manning in the 1980s (Manning 1983). These studies suggest a lifestyle highly influenced by the European culture: the introduction of the horse, fur trapping and trade, missionaries, mining, and homesteading. Sites relating specifically to this era have yet to be clearly distinguished from sites of earlier activities. An ethnographic document by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (Elders of the Kootenai Nation 1990) describes the history of the tribe and the effect of European settlement on aboriginal lands.

The KNF contains land that is subject to treaty rights for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. These treaty rights provide for hunting and fishing. Certain sites are still in use by Native Americans exercising their rights under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act.

The written history began with the trapper's and explorer's journals written in the early 1800s. The early traders were sent by Hudson's Bay and the Northwest Fur Trade companies. The remainder of the historic period is marked by the coming of the railroads, which opened land to miners scouring the Forest for gold and silver. Quickly, mining camps turned into towns. The demand for lumber ushered in the early loggers. The Homestead Act of 1862 provided opportunities for anyone willing to apply, file for deed of title, and improve their 160 acres to become landowners. Archaeologists have been piecing together a description of how the native peoples used the land now known as the Kootenai National Forest.

Several major activities dominate the history of the 19th and 20th centuries within this region, all represented by recorded sites on the Forest. These include: fur trade missionaries, mining, homesteading and agriculture, transportation, logging, and public management of the resources. All of these themes are represented by recorded sites on the Forest.

This prehistoric and historic past left its mark on the landscape that is visible today as cultural sites. The KNF has conducted cultural resources inventories in areas of planned projects and to date has completed 3,242 investigations, covering 1,709,332 acres of surveyed land. Through cultural resource survey 1,759 cultural sites have been identified within the KNF, including 1,138 historic sites and 624 prehistoric sites. Of the historic sites, 353 have been determined as not eligible and 151 have been determined as not eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. Another 634 historic sites have not yet been evaluated. Of the prehistoric sites, 54 have been determined as not eligible and 306 have been determined as eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, with 261 prehistoric sites not yet evaluated. If the artifacts present at a location do not warrant formal recording as a formal site, then they are recorded as "isolated finds." There are 48 historic and 44 prehistoric isolated finds on the Forest. In addition to the known historic and prehistoric sites, it is likely that many more will be uncovered as projects are planned for areas previously unexamined.

Information on cultural sites is kept on file as hard copy site and inventory forms, as well as on GIS and within the National Heritage Infra data base. Information concerning the nature and location of any cultural resource is confidential and not subject to public disclosure as per Public Law 94-456, [16 U.S.C. 470 hh Section 9 (a & b)].

## Environmental Consequences

The Heritage Program requirements for compliance with law and regulation are the same for all alternatives. The difference between the alternatives is the amount of survey, site evaluation, and possible mitigation required.

### *General Effects*

Effects to cultural resources are caused by direct project actions, public use and vandalism, and natural causes. “Direct project actions” include all of those activities, both beneficial and harmful, that are conducted by the Forest Service or authorized by Forest Service permits, including timber and silvicultural management, prescribed fire, wildlife and fisheries management, road and trail construction, facilities construction and maintenance, recreation use and management, and special uses authorization to third parties. “Public use and vandalism” of historic facilities and archaeological sites, causes disturbance and destruction of cultural resources. Natural causes include damage by wind and water erosion, fire, weathering, and other natural processes. The type of cultural resources and their management allocation must be taken into account to assess project effects.

Compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA and 36 CFR 800 regulations is fulfilled by a process to establish the presence of historic properties within the area of potential effect for each alternative; through background research, State Historic Preservation Office consultation, and an appropriate level of field investigation. This takes into account the number of alternatives under consideration, the magnitude of the undertaking and its likely effects, and the views of the State Historic Preservation Office/Tribal Historic Preservation Office and any other interested parties.

### **Alternative A — No-action Alternative**

Under the 1987 Forest Plan there were two identified historic special interest areas for cultural resources that were afforded special protection and enhancement treatment. The management direction was, and is designed, to protect and enhance the cultural resource within these special areas. The one additional special area identified in the revised Forest Plan would be excluded from special treatment under Alternative A.

Those MAs under the 1987 Forest Plan that allow for more active management (suitable timberland) would be more likely to have the potential to adversely affect cultural resources found through inadvertent discoveries after compliance with Section 106 (MAs 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16). MA2, 3, 7 through 10 would have less potential to adversely affect cultural resource areas.

### **Alternative B Modified, C, and D**

For Alternatives B Modified, C, and D the MAs have the same direction and only the size and location of the areas change. Since there are fewer MAs and they tend to be grouped with like activity sets it is easier to determine potential effect than for Alternative A. For these alternatives, MA6 and 7 are the most intensively managed and have the highest potential for adversely affecting cultural sites. However, as with Alternative A, MA3, 5, 6, and 7 with moderate to high use by the public may suffer from direct public use and vandalism, especially along trails, ridges and streams, rivers, lakes where hunters, campers, hikers, fishermen, and ATV riders dispersed camp; and where long established developed recreation sites may not have been inventoried. Along trails, streams, rivers, and lakes in more remote areas where public activities are concentrated, dispersed camping may have significant effects to cultural resources when not managed appropriately.

Compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA is required of all agency “undertakings” and would be consistently applied to Alternatives B Modified, C, and D. There would most likely be a decreased cultural resource workload for Alternative C which emphasizes wilderness and an increased cultural resource workload for Alternative D, as it emphasizes more active management related to timber production.

### *Consequences to Cultural Resources from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects that are Consistent in All Alternatives**

##### *Effects from Recreation Management*

The direct effects are related to management activities such as construction or reconstruction of developed and undeveloped recreation sites, such as adding new campground spurs and waterlines. The management of dead and dying vegetation can also have a direct effect on cultural resources. For the planned recreation projects direct effects can be eliminated or mitigated.

The indirect effects occur from recreation site use and would include such activities as trampling, which could expose sites and adversely affect their physical integrity. Another indirect effect is from looting of sites to remove artifacts, which is an adverse effect as well as a felony.

Unauthorized, user-created routes and areas have already affected historic properties within route/area prisms. A direct effect can be caused by motorized vehicle uses or the consequences of such use, including physical damage resulting in or from erosion, down-cutting, rutting, or displacement or damage to cultural features.

Indirect effects are associated with motorized vehicle uses but occur outside designated routes and areas, such as adjacent dispersed camping areas or areas where travel off of designated routes or areas may occur. The proximity of sensitive cultural resources, such as rock art, rock shelters, historic structures, and Traditional Cultural Properties, to designated routes or areas is important when determining where resources could be susceptible to greater threats or risks. Indirect effects could include those listed for direct effects, but also include destructive actions like vandalism and looting.

Any adverse effects can be mitigated through compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

##### *Effects from Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers*

The direct effects from the management of eligible wild and scenic rivers have the potential to directly affect cultural resources. The indirect effect of recreational use also has the potential to affect cultural resources. Any adverse effects can be mitigated through compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

##### *Effects from Botanical, Geological, Historical, Recreational, Scenic, or Zoological Areas*

The direct effects of management of Special Areas depend on the management direction specified for the resource managed within Special Areas. Any vegetation management, including fire use, has the potential for adverse effects. These effects can be mitigated through compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

#### **Effects that Vary Between Alternatives**

##### *Effects from Wilderness Management*

The management of wilderness may include camp site maintenance, which can cause damage to any cultural resources. The only other potential adverse effect would involve access. Roads provide access for the management of cultural sites and motorized restrictions limit access for that purpose. However, limitations on access into wilderness can contribute to protection of

cultural resources by limiting use. Alternative C provides the most recommended wilderness, and therefore, the greatest protection to cultural resources through limited use. Conversely, Alternative D provides the least amount of recommended wilderness, and thus, the least protection to cultural resources by limiting use.

#### *Effects from Motorized Use Management*

Adverse effects on cultural resources have been shown in past actions where motorized users have gone off road. When increased motorized use is planned, adverse effects can be mitigated through compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA. Alternative D provides the most motorized access, and thus, the least protection to cultural resources and the most mitigation needed. Alternative C provides the least amount of motorized access, therefore, the most protection to cultural resources and the least mitigation needed.

#### *Effects from General Forest Management*

General forest management, including vegetation management and fire use, has the potential for adverse effects to cultural resources. The adverse effects can be caused by machinery and vehicles: including tree felling, skidding, and burning of slash piles, and construction or reconstruction of roads. Any adverse effects can be mitigated through compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA. Alternative D provides the most timber harvest, and thus, the least protection to cultural resources and the most mitigation needed. Alternative C provides the least amount of timber harvest, therefore, the most protection to cultural resources and the least mitigation needed.

#### **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects, over time, can include loss and damage to cultural resources ranging from damage to the complete loss of a site. Adverse effects can occur to sites due to surface or subsurface disturbance with subsequent loss of physical and scientific integrity. Adverse effects to cultural resources representing the prehistoric period is also considered as a loss for the traditional cultural integrity by Tribes. Forest management causing surface disturbance may expose sites to illegal collection of artifacts (looting). Any adverse effects can be mitigated through compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

## *American Indian Rights and Interests*

### **Introduction**

Federal agencies have trust responsibilities to American Indian Tribes under treaty (Treaty Tribes) and in compliance with various laws and executive orders. Within the boundaries of the KNF, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have reserved, through a U.S. Treaty (the Hellgate Treaty of 1855), Tribe off-reservation Treaty Rights. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho also exercises rights under the Hellgate Treaty. Federal guidance for tribal consultation directs the Forest Service to increase and improve the involvement of tribes in the decision-making process in the areas where decisions affect tribes and their treaty rights and interests. There is a trust responsibility with regard to managing the resources on which the Treaties are based. The Forest is also required to consult with all federally-recognized tribes that had/have traditional uses within the Forest boundary. This consultation extends to the Kalispel, Spokane, and Coeur d'Alene Tribes.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **The Hellgate Treaty of 1855:** The Flathead, Kootenai, and Upper Pend d'Oreilles Indian Tribes reserved rights under the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 (July 16, 1855). These rights include the "right of taking fish at all usual and accustomed places, in common with citizens of the Territory, and of erecting temporary buildings for curing; together with the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries, and pasturing their horses and cattle upon open and unclaimed land." The federal government has trust responsibilities to Tribes under a government-to-government relationship to ensure that the Tribes reserved rights are protected. Consultation with the Tribes in early phases of project planning helps the Forest Service meet their trust responsibilities.
- **National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (P.L. 89-665, as amended, P.L. 91-423, P.L. 94-422, P.L. 94-458 and P.L. 96-515) Regulations 36 CFR Part 800 and 36 CFR 36 CFR Part 7:** This act pertains only to tangible properties (buildings, structures, sites, or objects) which are important in history and prehistory. It requires agencies to consider the effects of undertakings on properties eligible to or listed in the National Register of Historic Places by following the regulatory process specified in 36 CFR 800.

The portions of that act that relate specifically to coordination with Indian tribes were added in the 1992 amendments. These additions reflect the increased importance placed on tribal relations. A section of the act directs state and federal governments to assist in the establishment of preservation programs on Indian lands. These sections include:

- **Section 2:** It shall be the policy of the federal government, in cooperation with other nations and in partnership with the state, local governments, Indian tribes, and private organizations and individuals to:
  - (2) Provide leadership in the preservation of the prehistoric and historic resources of the United States and of the international community of nations and in the administration of the national preservation program.
  - (6) Assist state and local governments, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States to expand and accelerate their historic preservation programs and activities;

- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (P.L. 91-190) and Regulations 40 CFR 1500-1508:** Federal agencies began to invite Indian tribes to participate in forest management projects and activities that may affect them.
- **National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 (P.L. 4-588):** Directs consultation and coordination of NFS planning with Indian tribes.
- **American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (AIRFA) (P.L. 95-341 as amended, P.L. 103-344):** AIRFA states that "...it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right for freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to site, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonies and traditional rites".

Agencies must make a good faith effort to understand how Indian religious practices may come into conflict with other forest uses and consider any adverse impacts on these practices in their decision-making practices. The consideration of intangible, religious, ceremonial, or traditional cultural values and concerns which cannot be tied to specific cultural sites/properties could be considered under American Indian Religious Freedom Act.
- **Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA) (P.L. 96-95) and Regulations 43 CFR Part 7:** Establishes a permit process for the management of cultural sites on federal lands which provides for consultation with affected tribal governments.
- **Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA) (P.L. 101-601, 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013) and Regulations 43 CFR Part 10:** Addresses the rights of lineal descendants and members of Indian tribes, Alaska Native, and native Hawaiian organizations to certain human remains and precisely defined cultural items. It covers items currently in federal repositories as well as future discoveries. The law requires federal agencies and museums to provide an inventory and summary of human remains and associated funerary objects. The law also provides for criminal penalties in the illegal trafficking in Native American human remains and cultural items.
- **Interior Secretarial Order 3175 of 1993:** Establishes responsibility of all agencies to carry out trust responsibilities of the federal government and assess the impacts of their actions on Indian trust resources. It requires consultation with tribes when impacts are identified.
- **Executive Order 12866 of 1993, Regulatory Planning and Review:** Enhances planning and coordination with respect to both new and existing regulations. Makes process more accessible and open to the public. Agencies shall seek views of tribal officials before imposing regulatory requirements that might affect them.
- **Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-141):** Established a higher standard for justifying government actions that may impact religious liberties.
- **Executive Order 12898 of 1994:** Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations directs federal agencies to focus on the human health and environmental conditions in minority and low-income communities, especially in instances where decisions may adversely impact these populations.
- **Forest Service Tribal Relations Enhancement Act of 2006:**
  - **Reburial of Human Remains and Cultural Items:** The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act provide for repatriation of human remains and cultural items to lineal descendants and Indian tribes but does not address further disposition of these items. New authority would explicitly authorize the reburial of human remains and associated cultural items on NFS lands, when they were originally recovered from NFS or adjacent lands.

- **Confidentiality of Information:** An increased level of confidentiality would be authorized to protect information relating to reburials, sites, or resources of traditional or cultural importance, including human remains and information relating to traditional and cultural resources and practices provided in the course of research activities.
- **Forest Products for Traditional and Cultural Purposes:** American Indian and Alaska Native tribes have special cultural and traditional needs for forest products located on NFS lands, such as logs and planks for cultural structures. The legislative proposal would create an exception to a NFMA requirement to sell certain forest products by authorizing the Secretary to provide these products free of charge, when used for traditional and cultural purposes.
- **Access to National Forest System Lands:** The legislative proposal would reinforce the Forest Service's commitment to the American Indian Religious Freedom Act for access to NFS lands.
- **Executive Order 13007 of 1996, Indian Sacred Sites:** This order acknowledges the role of federal agencies to protect and preserve the religious practices and places of federally-recognized tribes and enrolled tribal members. It also requires agencies to consult with federally-recognized tribe to address tribal concerns for sacred sites on public land and to ensure access to religious places and avoidance of adverse effects to sacred sites in accordance with existing legislation.
- **Executive Order 13175 of 2000, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments:** Provides direction for consultation with tribal governments for formulating or implementing policies that have tribal implications. Also provides direction regarding consultation and coordination with Indian Tribes relative to fee waivers. Calls upon agencies to use a flexible policy with tribes in cases where proposed waivers are consistent with applicable federal policy objectives. It directs agencies to grant waivers in areas where the agency has the discretion to do so, when a tribal government makes a request. When a request is denied, the agency must respond to the tribe in writing with the rationale for denial<sup>1</sup>.
- **Executive 13084 of 1998, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes Governments:** Calls upon agencies to utilize flexible policy approaches at the Indian tribal level in cases when a proposed waiver is consistent with applicable federal policy objectives. The E.O. calls upon agencies to grant waivers in areas where the agency has discretion to do so. This is to be done when a tribal government makes a request; and for those instances where the agency may decline such a request, a reason must be supplied to the tribe.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 2 of this Executive Order states "In formulating or implementing policies that have tribal implications, agencies shall be guided by the following fundamental principles:

- The United States has a unique legal relationship with Indian tribal governments as set forth in the Constitution of the United States, treaties, statutes, Executive Orders, and court decisions. Since the formation of the Union, the United States has recognized Indian tribes as domestic dependent nations under its protection. The Federal Government has enacted numerous statutes and promulgated numerous regulations that establish and define a trust relationship with the United States.
- Our Nation, under the law of the United States, in accordance with treaties, statutes, Executive Orders, and judicial decisions, has recognized the right of Indian tribes to self-government. As domestic dependent nations, Indian tribes exercise inherent sovereign powers over their members and territory. The United States continues to work with Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis to address issues concerning Indian tribal self-government, tribal trust resources, and Indian treaty and other rights.
- The United States recognizes the right of Indian tribes to self-government and supports tribal sovereignty and self-determination."

#### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

- **36 CFR 261 Prohibitions in Areas Designated by Order; Closure of National Forest System Lands to Protect Privacy of Tribal Activities (2011):** “provides regulations regarding special closures to provide for closure of NFS lands to protect the privacy of tribal activities for traditional and cultural purposes to ensure access to NFS land, to the maximum extent practicable, by Indian and Indian tribes for traditional and cultural purposes”.
- **36 CFR 223.239 and .240 Sale and Disposal of National Forest System Timber, Special Forest Products, and Forest Botanical Products:** Section 223.239 provides regulations for free-use without a permit for members of Tribes with treaty or other reserved rights related to special forest products. Also free-use without a permit upon the request of the governing body of a Tribe. Section 223.240 provides regulations regarding harvest of special forest products by Tribes with treaty or other reserved rights.

#### **Key Indicator**

- The measurement indicators for American Indian Consultation are the effects to tribal interests as defined by Tribes, including tribally affiliated cultural resources, sacred sites, treaty rights, and religious freedom.

#### **Methodology and Analysis Process**

Effects to tribal interests are known only through direct tribal consultation. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes have responded to outreach on Forest Plan revision with expressed interest in consultation throughout the process.

#### **Affected Environment (Existing Condition)**

There are five federally-recognized American Indian nations with cultural affiliation on the KNF: the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the Kalispel Tribe, the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, the Spokane Tribe, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Forest Service administered lands today occupies lands that were in traditional aboriginal territory. The aboriginal territory of the Kalispel, Coeur d’Alene, and Spokane Tribes overlap with the territory now managed by the KNF along the Clark Fork Valley with the territory used by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The entire Forest is within aboriginal territory for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho.

Ethnographic records provide extensive documentation for the past aboriginal use of the Forest. There remains a poignant connection for American Indian Tribes between traditional and contemporary uses on their original aboriginal lands. Tribes continue to rely on ecosystems even as their cultures change, employing both traditional and contemporary ways of relating to their homelands and lands where they traditionally ranged to sustain their way of life. Lands within the KNF help to sustain a way of life, cultural integrity, social cohesion, and economic well-being for Tribes.

The KNF takes an active role on the Tribes behalf, especially in areas of treaty interest, rights, traditional/cultural resources, and ecosystem integrity, by maintaining opportunities for traditional American Indian land and resource use. The presence of healthy habitats is fundamental to the achievement of both usable and harvestable levels of resources significant to American Indians, as well as to ecosystem integrity.

The Flathead, Kootenai, and Upper Pend d'Oreilles Indian Tribes (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes) reserved rights under the Hellgate Treaty of 1855 (July 16, 1855). The



Kootenai Tribe of Idaho also exercises rights under the Hellgate Treaty. These rights include the "right of taking fish at all usual and accustomed places, in common with citizens of the Territory, and of erecting temporary buildings for curing; together with the privilege of hunting, gathering roots and berries, and pasturing their horses and cattle upon open and unclaimed land." The federal government has trust responsibilities to Tribes under a government-to-government relationship to ensure that the Tribes reserved rights are protected. Consultation with the Tribes in early phases of project planning helps the Forest Service meet their trust responsibilities.

The KNF has been meeting these treaty responsibilities by employing a Tribal Liaison from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, a position that has been in place since 1981. The Tribal Liaison is informed of planned projects on the Forest and coordinates with the appropriate tribal departments and Tribal Council, as well as with members of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho to identify issues. Issues are discussed with the line officers, who take these issues into consideration in making management decisions.

Consultation on Forest Plan revision began with the five tribes in 2002. The IPNF covered consultation with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the Kalispel Tribe, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and the Spokane Tribe as the bulk of aboriginal land for these four tribes are on that Forest. The KNF's consultation focused on consultation with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Through that process, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes identified 28 Special Areas. These Special Areas would require management strategies for managing the resources in the areas. Special Areas may be added by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes at later dates. The Special Areas are associated with the traditional beliefs of the Tribe in relation to its origins, cultural history, or the nature of the world; where the Tribes have historically gone, and are known to go today, to perform ceremonial activities in accordance with traditional cultural rules of practice; where an American Indian community has traditionally carried out economic, artistic, or other cultural practices important in maintaining their identity.

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

#### **Alternative A – No-action Alternative**

Alternative A does not include identified traditional/cultural special areas (i.e., MA3 in the revised Forest Plan), therefore, does not provide the Forest with specific direction for the management of these areas. Alternative A has a forestwide standard for cultural resources that requires the Forest to consult with Native American traditional religious leaders on any project having the potential to affect Native American cultural sites and practices.

#### **Alternatives B Modified, C, and D**

Under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D traditional/cultural special areas would be managed under MA3. These alternatives also require the Forest to consult with tribes when management activities may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use areas, according to the consultation protocol (FW-GDL-AI-01). The desired conditions for American Indian Rights and Interests, for all action alternatives, would be for the KNF: to recognize and maintain culturally significant species and the habitat necessary to support healthy, sustainable, and harvestable plant and animal populations to ensure that rights reserved by Tribes in the Hellgate Treaty are not significantly impacted or diminished (FW-DC-AI-01); to recognize, ensure, and accommodate tribal member access to the Forest for the exercise of Treaty Rights and Cultural uses consistent with law, policy, and regulation (FW-DC-AI-02); and to recognize and protect

traditional cultural areas as associated with the traditional beliefs of a Tribe about its cultural history (FW-DC-AI-03).

See the “Cultural Resource” section for management specific to traditional/cultural special areas.

*Consequences to Tribal Interest and Treaty Rights from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

**Effects from Management Area Prescriptions**

Areas allocated to traditional/cultural areas (MA3) are located across the Forest. They are usually small (less than 1,000 acres). Traditional/cultural areas would emphasize non-motorized recreation experiences and access. Alternatives B Modified, C, and D would preclude road construction in traditional/cultural areas (MA3-STD-AR-01); and allow mechanized use on designated routes only (MA3-GDL-AR-03). Reconstruction of existing roads would be allowed (MA3-GDL-AR-06). These standards and guidelines would protect those identified special areas (MA3) identified as important to tribal rights and interest. In addition, the Forest would consult with tribes when management activities may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use (FW-GDL-AI-01).

**Effects from Vegetation Management**

Looking at the overall direction for MAs by alternatives can provide a relative guide to effects to tribal resources, sacred sites, and cultural properties. Vegetation management may cause both beneficial and harmful effects to traditional uses, sacred sites, and cultural properties of interest to the tribes. Depending on the habitat type and management action, specific species of interest to the tribes will fall into one of three categories: 1) on an upward trend; 2) no change in trend; and 3) on a downward trend. For use of traditional resources the differences between alternatives are so complex that they can only be discussed in relative terms; while use and management of sacred sites and cultural properties may be discussed in more specific terms if their location and description are known to the Forest Service.

Alternative B Modified provides a mix of active and natural restoration activities; Alternative C has more concentration on natural vegetation succession patterns (see sections on wildlife, aquatics and botany for additional analysis); and Alternative D uses more active restoration activities than B Modified or C.

**Effects from Access and Recreation Management**

Effects could be related to management activities such as construction or reconstruction of developed and undeveloped recreation sites, such as adding new campground spurs, waterlines, signs, and outhouses. The management of dead and dying vegetation could also have a direct effect. Other effects could occur from recreation site use and would include such activities such as trampling; which could adversely affect traditional plants, as well as changing the traditional character of an area by introducing negative visual and audio impacts.

Unauthorized, user-created routes and areas could affect tribal resources. A direct effect could be caused by motorized vehicle uses or the consequences of such use; including physical damage resulting in or from erosion, down-cutting, rutting, and damage to tribal resources.

Indirect effects are associated with motorized vehicle uses but occur outside designated routes and areas, such as adjacent dispersed camping areas or areas where travel off of designated routes or areas may occur. The proximity of sensitive tribal resources, such as rock art, rock

shelters, and Traditional Cultural Properties, to designated routes or areas is important when determining where resources could be susceptible to greater threats or risks.

Access to traditional resources and sacred sites is a concern of all the tribes. While traditionally they may have reached these places by foot or horseback, today, motorized vehicles are essential for reaching these locations, especially for elders who can no longer walk long distances. Those alternatives with the least motorized access would cause the greatest effect to tribal access even though lack of access may preserve and protect tribal resources from use and vandalism by non-tribal members. All action alternatives would rely on forestwide elements specific to American Indian Rights and Interests (FW-DC-AI-01 through 03) to recognize impacts that may result from access and recreation management. The Forest would consult with tribes when access and recreation management activities may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use (Alternatives B Modified, C, and D - FW-GDL-AI-01; Alternative A – Forestwide Standard #12). There is some potential risk to sacred sites where American Indians conduct ceremonies that require privacy. If a road were built to or near such a site, the associated increase in visitation could make it difficult to conduct ceremonies there, undermining the important cultural practice. A tribe could request the KNF temporarily close the site to non-tribal members for a short period under the 2008 Farm Bill Authority. Road construction and reconstruction is not allowed in MA1a, b, and c (MA1a-STD-AR-01, 02; MA1b-STD-AR-03, 04; MA1c-STD-AR-03, 04). Road construction is also not allowed in botanical, historical (aka cultural areas), and zoological areas (MA3-STD-AR01), nor in MA5a, b, and c (see Plan for exceptions) (MA5a, b, c-STD-AR-01).

#### **Effects from Wilderness and Backcountry Management**

The management of wilderness may include camp site maintenance, which can cause damage to tribal resources. The only other potential adverse effect would involve access. Roads provide access for the management of tribal resources and motorized restrictions limit access for that purpose. However, limitations on access into wilderness can contribute to protection of tribal resources by limiting use. All action alternatives would rely on forestwide elements specific to American Indian Rights and Interests (FW-DC-AI-01 through 03) to recognize impacts that may result from wilderness management. The Forest would consult with tribes when access and recreation management activities may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use (Alternatives B Modified, C, and D - FW-GDL-AI-01; Alternative A – Forestwide Standard #12). The exercise of treaty rights and traditional uses of wilderness areas, proposed wilderness, and backcountry areas may be enhanced by maintaining the integrity of landscapes and plant resources in those areas. Sacred sites are likely to be located in these areas. There is still a potential that landscape integrity and sacred sites may be affected because of the activities that are permitted under the action alternatives. However, prior to implementing resource management activities impacts on Tribal government and Tribal practices would be assessed and consultation requirements fulfilled.

#### **Effects from Minerals Management**

Hard rock mining has had adverse effects on tribal resources, including the effects on health, integrity, and the general welfare of tribal people and their landscapes. All action alternatives would rely on forestwide elements specific to American Indian Rights and Interests (FW-DC-AI-01 through 03) to recognize impacts that may result from access and recreation management. The Forest would consult with tribes when minerals management activities may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use (Alternatives B Modified, C, and D - FW-GDL-AI-01; Alternative A – Forestwide Standard #12).

### Cumulative Effects

The past, present, and foreseeable future impacts to tribal resources are most pronounced in the establishment, current maintenance, and future maintenance of developed and dispersed recreation sites. The cumulative adverse direct and indirect effects of mining on tribal resources include audio and visual effects, as well as natural resource contamination.

There would be limited cumulative effects to tribal interests because of consultation requirements. The effects of other programmatic management and policy decisions would also be limited because they do not approve site-specific actions. Management decisions such as PACFISH, INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995), the NRLMD (USDA Forest Service 2007 March), and the management direction for grizzly bears in the motorized access management within the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak grizzly bear recovery zones (2011) ensure that projects are conducted in a way that minimize impacts to fish and wildlife habitat. By doing this, these programmatic actions safeguard the exercise of treaty rights and traditional uses of the NFS lands.

## Production of Natural Resources

This section includes the following resources:

- Timber
- Minerals
- Livestock Grazing
- Special Forest Products

## *Timber*

### **Introduction**

The KNF contains valuable timber resources. They are important for providing habitat for plants and animals and products that are in demand by the American public. These products include lumber, house logs, pulpwood, posts and poles, and firewood. Because of the value of the timber resource, commercial timber harvest is used to move vegetation towards their desired conditions, improve watershed condition, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce wildfire risk through reduced fuel loads. Timber harvest also provides jobs and income in logging and manufacturing of wood products.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976:** These acts set forth the requirements for Land and Resource Management Plans for the NFS.
- **The Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960:** "It is the policy of the Congress that the national forests are established and shall be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed and wildlife, and fish purposes...The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized and directed to develop and administer the renewable surface resources of the national forests for multiple-use and sustained yield of several products and services obtained there from...the achievement and maintenance in perpetuity of a high-level annual or regular periodic output of the various renewable resources of the national forests without impairment of the productivity of the land."
- **Organic Administration Act of 1897:** Forests are established "to improve and protect the Forest within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States."

#### *Regulation and Policy*

- **1982 Planning Rule Procedures:** The procedures of the 1982 NFS Land and Resource Management Planning Rule require the identification of areas suitable for timber production and the ASQ from those lands. In addition, the procedures require the analysis of the supply and demand situation for resource commodities.

### **Key Indicators**

- Number of suitable acres available for timber production;
- Associated allowable sale quantity;
- Acres of predicted harvest; and
- Long-term sustained yield capacity.

### **Methodology and Analysis Process**

Timber suitability was determined using various resource data and GIS to apply criteria and identify lands suitable for timber production. Criteria for suitability are defined in the 1982 Planning Rule procedures at 36 CFR 219.14. Data was developed using the latest data sources and requirements to match the criteria defined by resource specialists.

Timber demand is based on a capacity and capability analysis completed by the University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research (Sorenson et al. 2012).

Timber harvest was modeled using Spectrum, a software modeling system designed to assist decision makers in exploring and evaluating multiple resource management choices and objectives. Models constructed with Spectrum apply management actions to landscapes through a time horizon and display resulting outcomes. Management actions are selected to achieve desired goals while complying with all identified management objectives. One of the goals for all action alternatives was the objective to move vegetation towards desired condition. Other goals that were applied for some alternatives included maximizing timber output and present net value. The Spectrum model was used to determine ASQ, predicted timber volume sold, and acres treated by decade for each alternative.

### Analysis Area

The analysis area for timber suitability is comprised of the NFS lands administered by the KNF. The analysis area for timber demand consists of five counties comprising the timber impact zone. The analysis area for timber production is the lands suitable for timber production.

### Changes between Draft and Final

The analysis on timber capacity and capability was updated between draft and final EIS. See Sorenson et al. (2012). These updates are reflected in the timber demand section of the affected environment.

The Spectrum model was edited between draft and final EIS. Acres with natural disturbance (wildfire) were re-analyzed and updated in the final Spectrum model. The constraints for watersheds were adjusted to more accurately reflect management on the ground. The goals to move towards vegetation desired condition were also adjusted to reflect progress forestwide, rather than progress on lands suitable for timber production and lands not suitable separately. See appendix B for more detailed information on the changes made to the model between draft and final EIS. These updates in the model resulted in revised numbers for ASQ, predicted volume sold, long-term sustained yield capacity, and acres harvested for all alternatives.

The acres suitable for timber production were updated under Alternative B Modified to reflect changes in management area allocations from Alternative B.

### Affected Environment

#### *Timber Suitability*

Lands suitable for timber production are the land base for determining ASQ and vegetation management for timber production. The 1987 Forest Plan determined 1,263,000 acres to be suitable for timber production. Timber suitability was determined through the use of resource data and computer models and followed the handbook and planning regulations that were in place at the time.

There have been many changes to timber suitability as the Plan has been amended and implemented over the past two decades. These changes include reductions in lands suitable for timber production in grizzly bear core areas, riparian areas, and old growth. There have also been changes in data and land status, resulting in updated figures for timber suitability. As part of the Forest Plan revision, timber suitability was re-calculated to reflect these changes in management

and data. Table 128 displays timber suitability at the time the 1987 Plan was adopted and amended as it is currently being implemented.

**Table 128 Timber Suitability for the 1987 Plan**

Suitability Category	1987 Plan - as Written	1987 Plan - as Amended and Currently Implemented
Total NFS Lands	2,245,000	2,219,100
Non-Forest Land <sup>(1)</sup>	-82,000	-144,600
Withdrawn Lands <sup>(2)</sup>	-35,000	-89,000
Irreversible Resource Damage is likely <sup>(3)</sup>	-340,000	-253,000
Adequate Restocking not assured <sup>(3)</sup>	0	-20,700
Lands Tentatively Suitable for Timber Production	1,788,000	1,711,800
Lands where MA prescriptions preclude timber production, where management requirements cannot be met, or not cost efficient in meeting timber production objectives.	-525,000	-972,500
Lands Suitable for Timber Production	1,263,000	739,300

<sup>(1)</sup> Handbook direction at the time the 1987 Plan was developed had lands that were not productive (producing <20 cubic feet/acre/year) classified as “non-forested.” The 1982 planning rule procedure does not consider low productive lands as non-forested. Because of this change in definition and updated data, the total forested NFS lands have increased from the 1987 Plan.

<sup>(2)</sup> Change in the amount of withdrawn lands is mostly due to a change in the order of subtraction and not a change in actual withdrawn areas.

<sup>(3)</sup> The difference between irreversible damage and adequate restocking is mostly due to how these areas were defined and the data used.

### *Timber Demand*

Timber demand was analyzed as part of the 1987 Forest Plan. A potential timber demand of 223 MMBF per year was estimated for the KNF (KNF Forest Plan EIS, page II-57), based on regional goals used in the 1980 Resource Planning Act projections. In addition, analysis of potential timber supply requirements for the KNF was developed for five decades, resulting in ranges from 178 to 224 MMBF in the first two decades.

Timber demand was updated in 2012 using a capacity and capability analysis for the Forest. This analysis was conducted by the University of Montana’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research, resulting in a report prepared for the KNF (Sorenson et al. 2012). The term “capacity” refers to the volume of timber (excluding pulpwood) that existing mills could utilize annually. The term “capability” refers to the volume of trees of a certain size class that existing mills can efficiently process annually. The following information on timber demand is excerpted from this report.

Virtually all of the KNF non-reserved timberland is located in two Montana counties: Lincoln and Sanders. More than 20 percent of the recent (2009) timber harvest in this two-county area originated from the KNF. Most (96 percent) of the timber harvested from these counties consisted of green (live) trees. The species composition of the harvested volume in this two-county area was: 40 percent Douglas-fir, 22 percent ponderosa pine, 21 percent lodgepole pine, 10 percent western larch, and four percent true firs. House logs, posts and small poles, and other mills received less than one percent of the timber harvest volume. Pulp and paper mills utilized nine percent of the 2009 harvest from the two-county region.



The KNF identified a five-county area as the “Kootenai National Forest Impact Zone.” An impact zone is a geographic area delineated to depict a functioning economy as well as the area influenced by management of the KNF. This impact zone was used to determine the analysis area for the economic environment (see “Economic and Social Environment” for more information). The counties comprising the Kootenai National Forest Impact Zone are Bonner and Boundary counties in Idaho; and Flathead, Lincoln, and Sanders counties in Montana. Within the five-county area there are 39 timber-processing facilities currently operating as of 2011: 19 sawmills, 9 log home manufacturers, 6 log furniture manufacturers, 2 veneer and plywood facilities, 2 cedar products manufacturers, and one post and small pole plant.

Capacity to process timber in the KNF impact zone is estimated at 142 million cubic feet (MMCF), with 55 percent of capacity being used in 2011. Mills in the KNF impact zone are currently using about 77 MMCF of timber annually (table 129). Approximately 90 percent (69.6 MMCF) of the volume processed in the impact zone is composed of trees with diameter at breast height (DBH) greater than or equal to 10 inches. Nearly nine percent (6.6 MMCF) of the volume processed comes from trees 7.0 - 9.9 inches DBH, while slightly over one percent (1.1 MMCF) of processed volume comes from trees less than 7 inches DBH.

**Table 129. Annual Volume of Timber Processed by Tree Size Class (Excluding Pulpwood) for the Kootenai National Forest Impact Zone, 2011**

Thousand Cubic Feet of Timber		Thousand Board Feet Scribner of Timber	
Tree DBH (inches)	Volume Used	Tree DBH (inches)	Volume Used
<7	1,122	<7	1,122 MCF
7-9.9	6,583	7-9.9	25,280
10+	69,594	10+	302,147
<b>Total</b>	<b>77,299</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>328,549</b>

About 68 percent (96 MMCF) of existing capacity in the KNF impact zone is not capable of efficiently utilizing trees less than 10 inches DBH (table 130). Slightly over 45 MMCF of timber-processing capacity is capable of utilizing trees less than 10 inches DBH, and the majority of this capacity (36.7 MMCF) is in the 7 to 9.9 inches DBH class.

**Table 130. Annual Total Capacity and Capability\* to Process Trees by Size Class (Excluding Pulpwood) for the Kootenai National Forest Impact Zone, 2011**

Thousand Cubic Feet of Timber		Thousand Board Feet Scribner of Timber	
Tree DBH (inches)	Capability	Tree DBH (inches)	Capability
<7	8,563	<7	8,563 MCF
7-9.9	36,723	7-9.9	141,018
10+	96,418	10+	442,323
<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>141,705</b>	<b>Total Capacity</b>	<b>591,904</b>

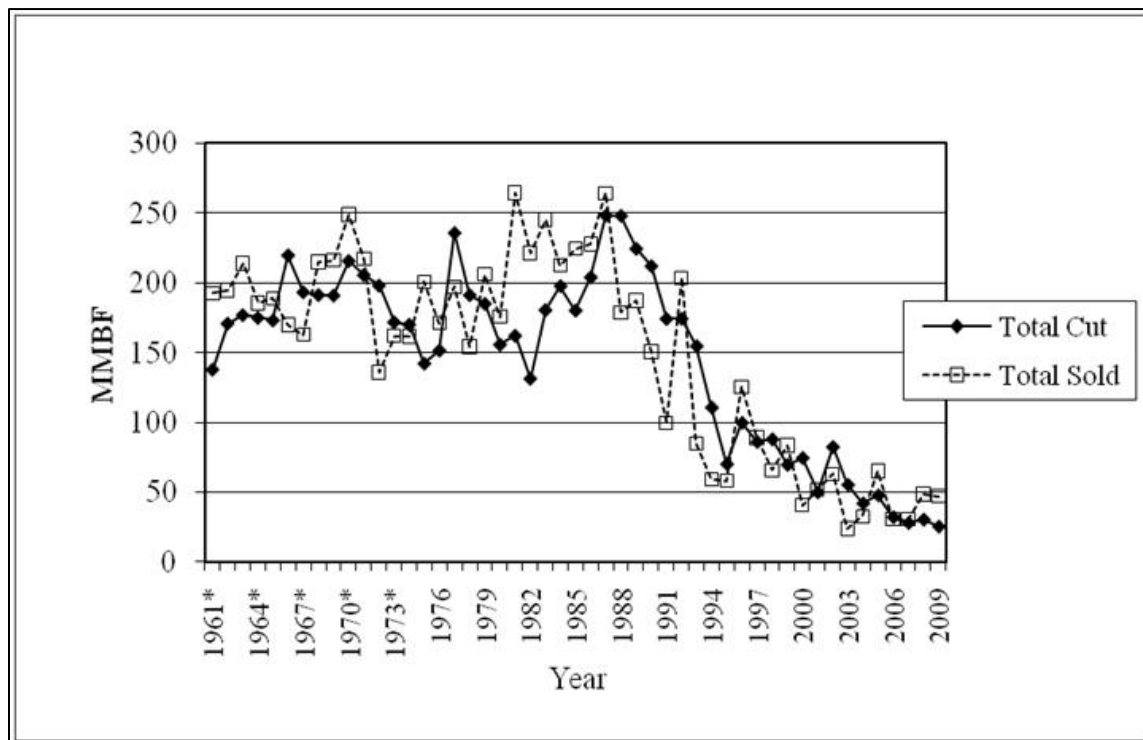
\* Note: Capability in <7 and 7-9.9 inch classes is the maximum volume capable of being used efficiently; capability in 10+ inches class is the portion of total capacity NOT capable of efficiently using trees with DBH <10 inches.

A substantial amount of the capacity capable of utilizing smaller diameter trees is being used to process larger trees or is simply going unused. Only about 13 percent of capacity in the less than 7 inches DBH category is currently utilized to process trees less than 7 inches DBH, and just slightly more than 18 percent of capacity in the 7 to 9.9 inches DBH category is being used to

process trees 7 to 9.9 inches DBH. More than 12.8 MMCF of capacity capable of using trees 7 to 9.9 inches DBH are used annually to process trees greater than or equal to 10 inches DBH. Recent (2007-2011) poor market conditions for lumber have reduced mill demand for smaller diameter logs used to make studs. When markets are poor it becomes more difficult to profitably produce lumber from small and low quality logs. The price of stud grade lumber (which is predominantly made from small logs) fell by a much higher percentage during the recent recession than many other dimensions and board and shop lumber grades. This reduced the profitability of sawing lower grades of lumber from smaller and lower quality logs. As lumber markets recover, increased capacity utilization can be expected across all the size classes.

### *Timber Supply*

Before the KNF was established, timber was harvested on the Forest to meet the needs of the people living in the area. Like many other national forests, timber harvest on the Forest greatly increased in the 1960s to meet the demands of a rapidly growing economy. Figure 38 displays the total volume of timber cut and sold on the KNF from 1961 to 2009. The amount cut is based on the amount sold by the Forest Service. The amount and timing of harvest from the volume under contract with the Forest Service is in response to market conditions and demand for timber products.



\* Timber volumes prior to 1974 did not include the portion of the Kaniksu National Forest now administered by the Kootenai.

**Figure 38. Volume Cut and Sold on the KNF (in MMBF)**

The 1987 Forest Plan set the ASQ at 2,270 MMBF for the first decade, or 227 MMBF annually. In November 1995, the Chief of the Forest Service issued a decision on a Forest Plan appeal related to a technical error in the calculation of the KNF's ASQ. The issue centered on how timber age classes were cataloged in the inventory information used to calculate ASQ. A description of the problem is in the FY92 Monitoring Report. The decision required that the

Forest is not to exceed a sell volume of 150 MMBF per year until the Forest Plan is either amended or revised.

Timber supply under the 1987 Forest Plan was described in the AMS Technical Report (USDA Forest Service 2003 March) and in Forest Plan monitoring and evaluation reports. These documents show that timber supply levels have been below those projected in the 1987 Forest Plan. Reasons for the difference between projected and actual harvest levels include Forest Plan amendments (e.g., INFISH), new or updated threatened and endangered recovery direction, water quality concerns, and policies regarding entry into IRAs, public controversy, and a reduction in budget. The amount of timber sold on the KNF has averaged 44.4 MMBF/year (2005 to 2009).

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

#### **Timber Suitability**

Lands tentatively suitable for timber production are constant for all alternatives. These are lands that are physically capable and have not been administratively withdrawn (such as wilderness) for timber harvest. Analysis identified 1,711,800 acres as tentatively suitable. See table 128 in the “Affected Environment” section above for a listing of acres that are not tentatively suitable for all alternatives (column “1987 Plan as Amended and Currently Implemented”).

From the lands tentatively suitable for timber, 811,100 acres were found to have other resource concerns that would preclude timber production as an objective. This includes riparian areas, grizzly bear core areas, and old growth. Depending on the MA, some of these acres may allow timber harvest for resource concerns other than timber production. Any timber harvest off these lands is not scheduled and would not occur on a rotation basis. These acres are not suitable for timber production.

Timber suitability is also affected by MA allocations. Lands in MA6 are suitable for timber production. All other MAs preclude timber production as an objective. Timber harvest may be allowed in other MAs (3, 5a, 5b, 5c, 7, and part of 2), but only to meet other resource objectives. These acres are not suitable for timber production. Table 131 displays timber suitability for each alternative.

**Table 131. Timber Suitability by Alternative**

<b>Timber Suitability</b>	<b>Alternative A</b>	<b>Alternative B Modified</b>	<b>Alternative C</b>	<b>Alternative D</b>
Acres Tentatively Suitable	1,711,800	1,711,800	1,711,800	1,711,800
Acres where management objectives limit timber harvest where mgmt requirements cannot be met	811,100	811,100	811,100	811,100
Acres where management precludes timber production as an objective	161,400	107,000	146,900	48,000
Acres Suitable for Timber Production	739,300	793,700	753,800	852,700
Percent of NFS Land Suitable for Timber Production	33%	36%	34%	38%

Alternative A is the current Plan as amended and implemented. Timber suitability has been updated to reflect Forest Plan amendments and current conditions (see earlier discussion on timber suitability for the 1987 Forest Plan). Acres suitable for timber production are slightly lower in this alternative than found in the action alternatives. This is because MAs under the 1987 Forest Plan were very small, fragmented, and discretely determined timber suitability. The MA allocation of the 1987 Plan combined with amendments and current conditions limits the acres suitable for timber production below those found in the action alternatives.

As the Plan is implemented on the ground, timber suitability may change based on site-specific analysis. Broad-scale information is used in determining lands suitable for timber production in the Plan. As a result, changes may occur at the project-scale level using site-specific data. Changes to timber suitability will be monitored during implementation of the Plan.

Timber harvest is allowed on lands not suitable for timber production (see FW-GDL-TBR-01), for such purposes as salvage, fuels management, insect and disease mitigation, protection or enhancement of biodiversity or wildlife habitat, or to perform research or administrative studies, or recreation and scenic-resource management. Timber harvest on these lands would have to be consistent with other management direction. Acres where timber harvest is allowed on land not suitable for timber production are as follows: Alternative A = 925,000 acres (42 percent of the Forest); Alternative B Modified = 913,200 acres (41 percent of the Forest); Alternative C = 940,400 acres (42 percent of the Forest); and Alternative D = 855,100 acres (39 percent of the Forest). Timber harvest on these lands is not scheduled or managed on a rotation basis, and do not contribute towards the allowable sale quantity or the predicted volume sold described below.

#### Allowable Sale Quantity and Predicted Volume Sold

The ASQ for each alternative was formulated by considering the lands suitable for timber production, vegetation desired condition, other multiple-use objectives, and the management requirements set forth in NFMA. The ASQ is a ceiling and is not constrained by budget. To develop a predicted volume sold a budget constraint reflecting current budgets was included for each alternative.

Timber harvest levels for the alternatives were calculated using Spectrum (see appendix B). The model was run with a mix of objective functions, based on the theme of the alternative. Alternative A was run with an objective to maximize timber production while Alternatives B Modified and C had objectives to move towards vegetation desired condition as quickly as possible, while meeting other resource objectives. Alternative D had an objective function to maximize timber and then to move towards vegetation desired condition. All solutions were finally run with an objective to maximize present net value to ensure economic efficiency in vegetation treatments. Table 132 displays the volume offer and ASQ for each alternative. The ASQ is a decadal number, but is shown as a yearly annual figure in this table. Outputs are shown by both million cubic feet (MMCF) and million board feet (MMBF) per year.

**Table 132. Allowable Sale Quantity and Volume Sold by Alternative — Decade 1**

Measure	Alt A <sup>1</sup>	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Annual Allowable Sale Quantity				
MMBF/yr	87.5	80.2	75.9	98.7
MMCF/yr	15.6	14.7	14.0	17.6
Predicted Volume Sold				
MMBF/yr	50.5	47.5	36.8	50.5

Measure	Alt A <sup>1</sup>	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
MMCF/yr	9.2	8.6	6.7	9.2

Numbers for Alternative A reflect the 1987 Plan as amended and implemented. These numbers are based on the latest data and the Spectrum model developed for plan revision.

Source: Spectrum model analysis

The effects on timber production are directly related to the amount of acres classified as suitable for timber production and acres within MA6. The amount of timber production is also directly related to the objective the model was run under based on the theme of the alternative.

Alternative D has the highest and Alternative C the lowest ASQ and volume sold.

Table 133 displays the acres harvested in decade one to achieve the volumes shown in table 132. Acres harvested are a mix of silvicultural prescriptions, including even- or two-aged regeneration, uneven-aged management, and intermediate harvests. Alternative B Modified has the most acres harvested in achieving the ASQ and Alternative A the least. Alternatives B Modified and C have more intermediate harvest acres to move vegetation towards desired condition while Alternatives A and D have more acres with regeneration harvest to maximize timber harvest volume.

**Table 133. Acres Harvested to meet ASQ and Volume Sold — Decade 1**

	Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Acres to meet ASQ	57,320	94,800	91,290	65,440
Acres to meet Predicted Volume Sold	61,150	58,280	63,450	56,400

Source: Spectrum model analysis

To ensure sustainability, a long-term sustained yield capacity (LTSYC) was calculated for the Forest based on management activities to achieve desired conditions. LTSYC is defined as “the highest uniform wood yield from lands being managed for timber production that may be sustained under specified management intensity consistent with multiple-use objectives” (1982 planning procedures, 36 CFR 219.3). The LTSYC is not constrained by budget. Table 134 displays the LTSYC for the Forest.

**Table 134. Long-term Sustained-yield Capacity (LTSYC) by Alternative (MMCF/year)**

Measure	Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Long-term Sustained-yield Capacity	15.7	17.0	16.3	18.1

Source: Spectrum model analysis

Figures 39 through 42 display the ASQ and predicted volume sold in relation to the LTSYC for each alternative. Because LTSYC is the highest wood yield sustainable, it is greater than or equal to ASQ. Because volume sold is limited by current budgets, it is well below the LTSYC for each alternative.

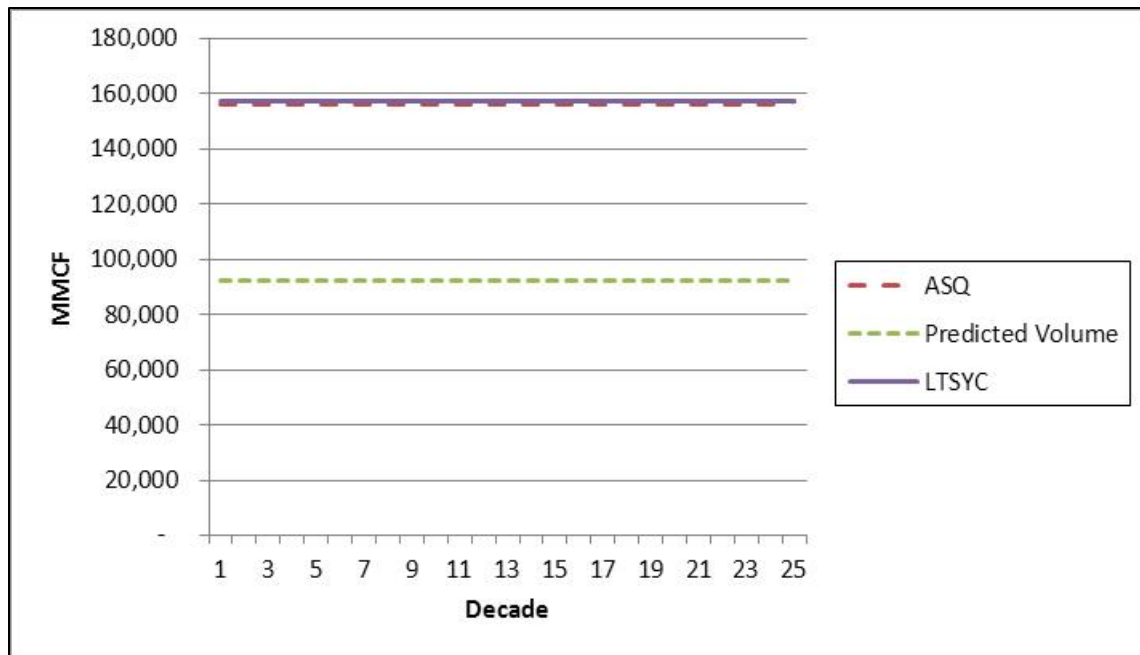


Figure 39. Alternative A — Allowable Sale Quantity, Predicted Volume, and Long-Term Sustained-Yield Capacity

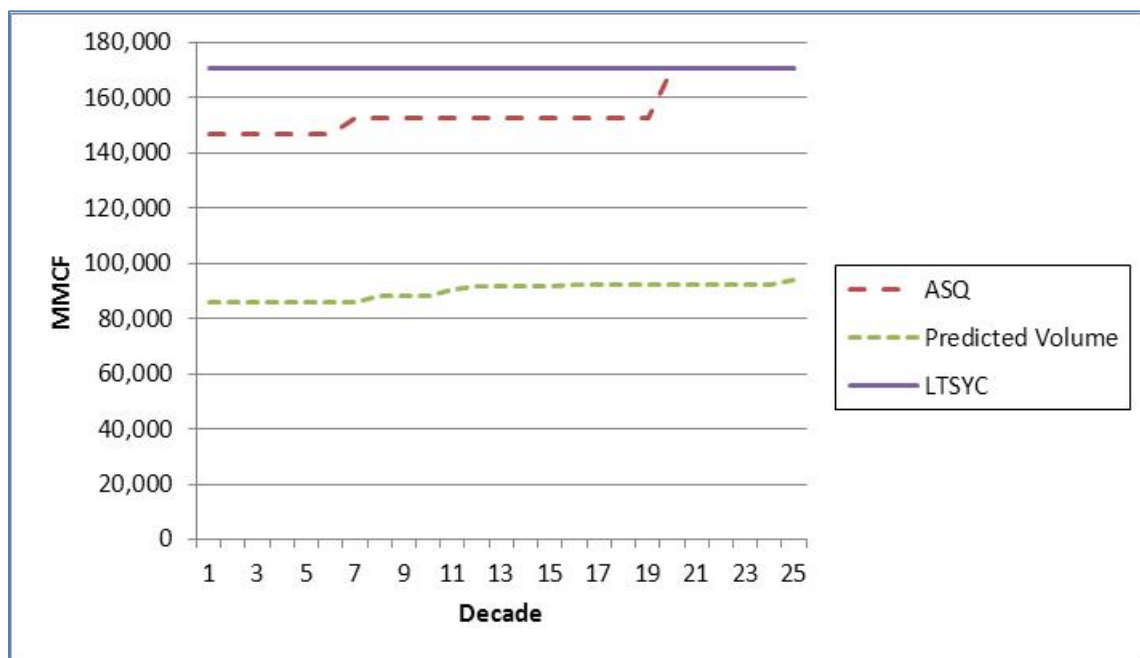
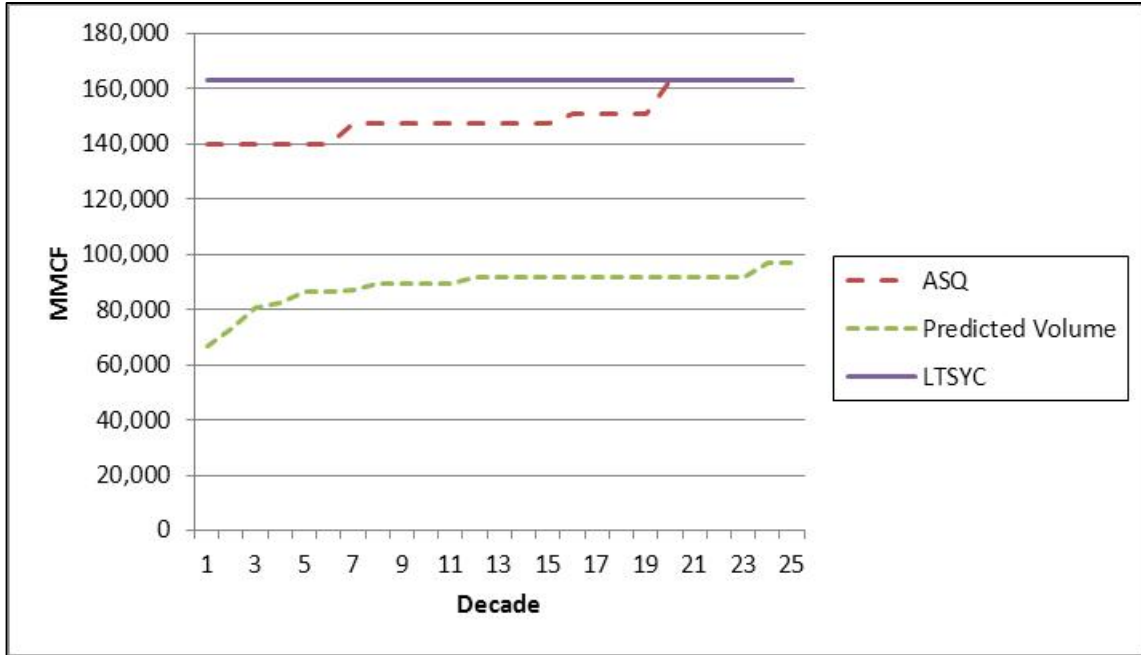
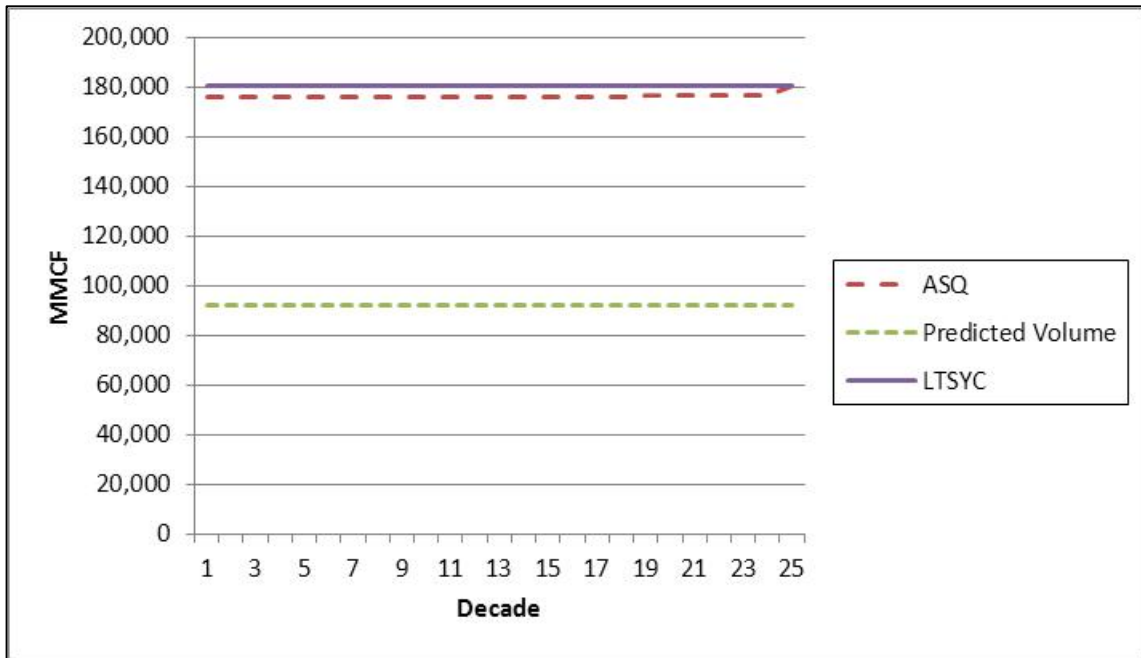


Figure 40. Alternative B Modified — Allowable Sale Quantity, Predicted Volume, and Long-Term Sustained-Yield Capacity



**Figure 41. Alternative C — Allowable Sale Quantity, Predicted Volume, and Long-Term Sustained-Yield Capacity**



**Figure 42. Alternative D — Allowable Sale Quantity, Predicted Volume, and Long-Term Sustained-Yield Capacity**

Alternative D has the highest LTSYC, followed by Alternatives B Modified and C. The ASQ in Alternatives A and D are the closest to LTSYC over most of the modeling period, while Alternatives B Modified and C are the furthest from LTSYC. All alternatives reach LTSYC before the end of the modeled time period.

Additional analysis was conducted to meet the requirements of the 1982 planning procedures, including analysis on costs, benefits, and the efficiency of management prescriptions. See appendix B for a description of the analysis and documentation of the results.

*Consequences to Timber from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

**Effects from Fire and Fuels**

Fire and fuels management generally has a positive effect on timber management. The objectives for fuel reduction are consistent with commercial timber harvest. Timber harvest is often the tool for reducing fire risk through a reduction in fuel loading. Timber harvest also moves vegetation towards desired conditions that are more resilient and less fire-prone. Alternative D has the most management activities for fire and the most positive impact on timber harvest.

**Effects from Aquatic Habitat, Riparian, Watershed, and Wildlife**

Measures to protect aquatic habitat, riparian areas, watersheds, and wildlife limit the amount of timber that may be harvested. Riparian areas and certain wildlife areas (such as grizzly bear core areas) are not suitable for timber production. This reduces the amount of land available for scheduled timber harvest. Protection measures for watersheds, aquatic habitat, and wildlife limit the amount of openings and the type of harvest. All of these factors reduce the amount of timber harvest. The reduction in timber harvest is the same for all alternatives.

**Effects from Inventoried Roadless Areas**

The amount of IRAs that are allocated to MAs suitable for timber production varies by alternative. Table 135 displays acres suitable for timber production that are within IRAs. The table also shows the acres of IRAs that are scheduled for harvest sometime over the planning horizon (250 years) and the amount of timber harvest from these areas in the first decade. For the predicted volume sold level, no alternative shows any timber harvest in IRAs in the first decade and minimal acres are scheduled for harvest over the planning horizon.

**Table 135. Acres Suitable for Timber Production, Percent Scheduled for Harvest, and First Decade Harvest within Inventoried Roadless Areas**

Alternative	Acres Suitable for Timber Production in IRA	Percent Scheduled for Harvest (over 250 years)	Timber Harvest from IRA Decade 1 (MMBF/yr)
<b>ASQ Level</b>			
A	37,100	50%	0.5
B Modified	4,900	62%	2.3
C	2,000	67%	1.3
D	61,200	71%	9.5
<b>Predicted Volume Sold</b>			
A	37,100	0%	0.0
B Modified	4,900	39%	0.0
C	2,000	42%	0.0
D	61,200	12%	0.0



Timber harvest within IRAs is limited, requires additional analysis, and receives a great deal of public and agency scrutiny. Because of limited access and the additional analysis and public/agency involvement, unit costs for timber harvest are much higher within an IRA. No alternative schedules all IRA acres for timber harvest, with fewer acres scheduled under constrained budgets (the predicted timber volume level). Alternatives B Modified and C have the fewest acres of IRA suitable for timber production and have little timber volume generated from these lands. Alternative D has the most acres of IRA suitable for timber production, with a larger percentage of those lands scheduled for harvest under the ASQ run. However, management opportunities are expected to continue to be limited within IRAs and harvest within these areas may be infeasible.

### **Effects from Budget**

The budget has a large effect on the amount of timber that can be harvested from the KNF. As described previously, the ASQ is unconstrained by budget while the predicted volume sold is constrained by current budget levels. The budget that would be necessary to achieve ASQ would need to be more than double current levels in all alternatives.

### **Effects from Natural Disturbance**

Insects, disease, and wildfire can affect the production of timber by killing and damaging trees. The Spectrum model included a predicted amount of wildfire on the Forest based on current fire suppression success and fire starts. See appendix B for more information on the Spectrum model.

Under all alternatives, there exists potential for salvage/sanitation cuts to harvest dead and damaged timber and to attempt to slow or impede infestations from spreading. The degree to which these harvests are undertaken will largely depend upon the risks associated with wildfire potential, infestation spread into healthy stands, public safety, the presence of high value resources, and the resource emphasis of the infected or adjoining area.

Under Alternatives B Modified and C, where there are more acres in recommended wilderness and backcountry management, there is a greater potential for infestations from insects and disease. There is also the potential for more wildfire. This could result in a short-term increase in timber harvest through salvage sales on lands where timber harvest is allowed.

Catastrophic events, such as large wildfires and epidemic insect outbreaks, were not included in the modeling because of uncertainty in the extent or timing of such an occurrence. If a catastrophic event does occur in the future, analysis would need to be conducted to determine if the event would warrant a Forest Plan amendment for changed conditions.

### **Cumulative Effects**

There are many factors that influence and affect timber harvest. The demand for timber products, supply from other sources, laws, and regulations all affect the amount of timber that may be harvested from the KNF. Budgets and court decisions also impact timber supply potential. Following is a brief description of some items that are changing or may change in the future, adding to the effects on timber harvest from the alternatives.

### **Demand and Future Timber Products**

The demand for timber products is a driver in the amount of wood fiber supplied from the KNF. Diversification of wood product manufacturing has historically allowed Montana mills to be more resilient in changing markets (Montana DNRC 2010). This diversification leads to new

products and new processing techniques, and affects the demand for wood fiber. If markets improve and demand for wood products increases, there will be the desire for more wood fiber from the KNF. If demand decreases and mills close, there may be less desire for wood fiber from the KNF. A decrease in demand may reduce the amount of timber sold from the KNF under all alternatives.

#### **Alternative Sources for Wood Fiber**

The supply of wood fiber from private and state lands and adjacent national forests impacts KNF demand. If wood fiber supplies decrease from private and state lands and adjacent national forests, there will be an increasing demand for wood fiber from the KNF. If supplies increase from private and state lands and adjacent national forests, there may be a decrease in demand for wood fiber from the KNF. A decrease in demand may reduce the amount of timber sold from the KNF under all alternatives.

#### **Subdividing corporate timberlands**

Montana, like many states across the West, is experiencing a massive divestiture of commercial timberlands for development and subdivisions (Montana DNRC 2010). Corporate timberland has become more valuable for recreational or residential real estate than for timber production. This development results in increased fragmentation of forested landscapes and decreased timber harvest on private lands. The increased fragmentation limits the amount of harvest that may occur on adjacent national forest lands, while the decreased supply from private lands increases the demand for timber harvest from the KNF. The limit on timber harvest from fragmentation of adjacent lands would limit the amount of timber sold from the KNF under all alternatives.

## *Minerals*

### **Introduction**

The 192-million-acre NFS is an important part of the nation's resource base. As directed by the Organic Administration Act of 1897 and the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960, the national forests are managed by the USDA's Forest Service for continuous production of their renewable resources – timber, clean water, wildlife habitat, forage for livestock, and outdoor recreation.

Although not renewable, minerals are resources of the national forests and are important to the nation's welfare. The national forests contain much of the country's remaining stores of mineral resources. Prime examples include: the national forests of the Rocky Mountains, the Basin and Range Province, the Cascade-Sierra Nevada Ranges, and the Alaska Coast range.

Geologically, NFS lands contain some of the most favorable host rocks for mineral deposits. Approximately 6.5 million acres are known to be underlain by coal. Approximately 45 million acres, or one-quarter of NFS lands, have potential for oil and gas; while about 300,000 acres within the Pacific Coast and Great Basin States have potential for geothermal resource development.

Within the past few years, the energy use and demand in this country has reminded us that the nation's mineral resources are limited. As with oil supplies, there will likely be tightening of world supplies of minerals. Such a trend is leading to considerable expansion of domestic mineral prospecting, exploration, and development. Much of this increased activity is on NFS lands where they are available for mineral exploration and development.

### *Forest Service Role in Minerals Management*

In the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970, Congress declared that it is the continuing policy of the federal government, in the national interest, to foster and encourage private enterprise in (among other goals) the development of domestic mineral resources and the reclamation of mined land. This federal policy applies to NFS lands.

The Forest Service recognizes the importance of NFS mineral resources to the well-being of the nation, and encourages bona-fide mineral exploration and development. But, it also recognizes its responsibility to protect the surface resources of the lands under its care. Thus, the Forest Service is faced with a double task: to make minerals from national forest lands available to the national economy, and at the same time, minimize the adverse impacts of mining activities on other resources.

Land management planning, as mandated by the NFMA of 1976, is a principal tool for assuring that mineral resources are given proper consideration. Before plans are approved, specialists evaluate resource activities including existing and potential mineral development. Planners and decision makers then formulate plans to minimize potential resource conflicts and maximize the various uses and values of NFS lands. Since mineral resources are often sub-surface, relatively rare, and are governed by certain preferential laws, the land management planning procedures provide for the availability of minerals and development of mineral operations where possible.

Minerals management of NFS lands requires interagency coordination and co-operation. Although the Forest Service is responsible for the management of surface resources of NFS lands, the BLM in the USDI is primarily responsible for management of government-owned

minerals. Since it is not possible to separate mineral operations from surface management, the agencies have developed cooperative procedures to accommodate their respective responsibilities.

## Legal and Administrative Framework

The following statutory authorities provide direction under which exploration and development of mineral and energy resources on NFS lands may be conducted:

### *Law and Executive Orders*

#### **Surface Management Authority**

- **Organic Administration Act of June 4, 1897 (30 Stat. 11, as amended; 16 U.S.C. § 473 et seq.):** This act provides the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to regulate the occupancy and use of NFS lands. It provides for the continuing right to conduct mining activities under the general mining laws if the rules and regulations covering NFS lands are complied with. This act recognizes the rights of miners and prospectors to access NFS lands for all proper and lawful purposes, including prospecting, locating, and developing mineral resources.
- **Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of June 12, 1960 (P.L. 86-517, 74 Stat. 215; 16 U.S.C. 528 et seq.):** This act requires that NFS lands be administered in a manner that considers the values of the various resources when making management decisions and specifically provides that nothing in the act be construed to affect the use or administration of the mineral resources on NFS lands.
- **Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (P.L. 88-577, 78 Stat. 890; 16 U.S.C. § 1121, et seq.):** This act provides that, subject to valid rights existing prior to January 1, 1984, wilderness areas are withdrawn from all forms of appropriation and disposition under the mining and mineral leasing laws. Subsequent acts designating additional NFS lands as wilderness may contain specific provisions concerning mineral activities. Patents issued under the mining laws for mining claims staked after passage of this act within wilderness areas shall reserve the surface rights to the United States. The act provides for reasonable access to valid mining claims and other valid occupancies inside wilderness areas. The act also requires the survey of wilderness areas by the U.S. Geological Survey on a planned, recurring basis consistent with the concept of wilderness preservation to determine the mineral values that may be present.
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, January 1, 1970 (P.L.91-190, 83 Stat. 852; 42 U.S.C. § 4331 et seq.):** This act requires federal agencies to use a systematic interdisciplinary approach to ensure the integrated use of natural and social sciences in planning and decision making. It also requires an analysis of probable environmental effects of proposed federal actions. Generally, decisions on mineral and energy development are subject to this law.
- **Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of August 17, 1974 (P.L. 93-378, 88 Stat. 476; 16 U.S.C. § 1600 et seq.):** This act directs the assessment of all resources on NFS lands to determine the desired level of future production from Forest Service programs. Once approved, the policy statement and recommended program serve as a guide to future Forest Service planning and a basis for future budget proposals.
- **National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of October 22, 1976 (P.L. 94-588, 90 Stat. 2949; 16 U.S.C. § 1600 et seq.):** The act requires the Forest Service to establish a comprehensive system of land and resource planning, including the development and maintenance of a comprehensive and detailed inventory of lands and resources. The act also

specifies the use of a systematic interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of the physical sciences into planning for the management and use of NFS lands and resources.

### Mineral Management Authorities

- **U.S. Mining Laws Act of May 10, 1872 (17 Stat. 91, as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 22 et seq):** This act (often referred to as the General Mining Act of 1872) sets forth the principles of discovery, right of possession, assessment work, and patent for hard-rock minerals on lands reserved from the public domain. The law applies to lode, placer, mill-site claims, and tunnel sites. Except as otherwise provided, all valuable mineral deposits, and the lands in which they are found, are free and open to exploration, occupation, and purchase under regulations prescribed by law.
- **Organic Administration Act of 1897 (30 Stat. 11, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 473 et seq):** Reserved lands for national forests purposes and opened them to the operations under U.S. mining laws, provided individuals/operators comply with the rules and regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture. This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to regulate occupancy and use of the national forests. The act permits access to national forests for all lawful purposes, including prospecting and locating and developing mineral resources.
- **Weeks Law Act of March 1, 1911 (P.L. 61-435, 72 Stat. 1571, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 480 et seq):** This act authorized the federal government to purchase lands for stream-flow protection, and maintain the acquired lands as national forests.
- **Mineral Resources on Weeks Law Lands Act of March 4, 1917 (P.L. 64-390, 39 Stat. 1149, 16 U.S.C. § 520):** This act authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to issue permits and leases for prospecting, developing, and utilizing hard-rock minerals on lands acquired under the authority of the act. This authority was later transferred to the Secretary of the Interior.
- **Mineral Leasing Act of February 25, 1920 (P.L. 66-146, 41 Stat. 437 as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 181 et seq.):** This act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to issue leases for the disposal of certain minerals (coal, phosphate, sodium, potassium, oil, oil shale, gilsonite, and gas). The act applies to NFS lands reserved from the public domain, including lands received in exchange for timber or other public domain lands, and lands with minerals reserved under special authority.
- **Clarke-McNary Act of June 7, 1924 (P.L. 68-270, 43 Stat. 653 as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 505 et seq.):** All lands to which title is accepted under section 7 of this act become national forest lands, subject to all laws applicable to the lands acquired under the Weeks Act of March 1, 1911.
- **Mineral Materials Act of July 31, 1947 (P.L. 80-291, 61 Stat. 681, as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 601 et seq.):** This act provides for the disposal of mineral materials on the public lands through bidding, negotiated contracts, and free use.
- **Mineral Leasing Act for Acquired Lands of August 7, 1947 (P.L. 80-382, 61 Stat. 913, as amended, 30 U.S.C. § 351 et seq.):** This act extends the provisions of the mineral leasing laws to federally owned mineral deposits on acquired NFS lands and requires the consent of the Secretary of Agriculture prior to leasing.
- **Multiple Use Mining Act of July 23, 1955 (P.L. 84-167, 69 Stat. 368, as amended, 30 U.S.C § 601 et seq.):** This act requires the disposal of common varieties of sand, stone, gravel, pumice, pumicite, and cinders under the provisions of the Materials Act of July 31, 1947, and gives to the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to dispose of these materials. It

also provides that rights under any mining claim located under the mining laws are subject to the right of the United States to manage and dispose of surface resources.

- **Geothermal Steam Act of December 24, 1970 (P.L. 91-581, 84 Stat. 1566, 30 U.S.C. § 1001-1025):** This act provides the Secretary of the Interior the authority to lease NFS lands for geothermal steam development, subject to the consent and conditions the Secretary of Agriculture may prescribe.
- **Mining and Minerals Policy Act of December 31, 1970 (P.L. 91-631, 84 Stat. 1876, 30 U.S.C. § 21a):** This act states that the continuing policy of the federal government is to foster and encourage private enterprise in the development of economically sound and stable domestic mining and minerals industries and the orderly and economic development of domestic mineral resources.
- **Federal Coal Leasing Amendments Act of August 4, 1976 (90 Stat. 1083; 30 U.S.C. § 201 et seq.):** This act amended the Mineral Lands Leasing Act of February 25, 1920 (para. 3) by specifying that coal leases on NFS lands may be issued only after the consent of the Secretary of Agriculture and adherence to conditions the Secretary may prescribe. The act also provides that no lease shall be issued unless the lands involved in the lease have been included in a comprehensive forest land and resource management plan and the sale is compatible with the Plan. The act authorizes the issuance of a license to conduct exploration for coal.
- **Federal Land Policy and Management Act of October 21, 1976 (P.L. 94-579, 90 Stat. 2713, 43 U.S.C. § 1701 et seq., 7 U.S.C. § 1212a, 16 U.S.C. § 478a, 1338a):** This act defines procedures for the withdrawal of lands from mineral entry. It reserves to the United States the rights to prospect for, mine, and remove the minerals in lands conveyed to others and requires the recordation of claims with the BLM.
- **Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of August 3, 1977 (P.L. 95-87, 91 Stat. 445, 30 U.S.C. § 1201-1328):** This act provides for cooperation between the Secretary of the Interior and states in the regulation of surface coal mining. It also restricts or prohibits surface coal mining operations on NFS lands, subject to valid existing rights and compatibility determinations.
- **Energy Security Act of June 30, 1980 (P.L. 96-294, 94 Stat. 611, 42 U.S.C. § 8855):** This act directs the Secretary of Agriculture to process applications for leases and permits to explore, drill, and develop resources on NFS lands, notwithstanding the current status of the forest land and resource management plan.
- **National Materials and Minerals Policy, Research and Development Act of October 2, 1980 (94 Stat. 2305; 30 U.S.C. § 1601-1605):** This act restates congressional intent to promote policies that provide for an adequate and stable supply of materials while considering long-term needs, a healthy environment, and natural resource conservation. The act also requires the Secretary of the Interior to improve the availability and analysis of mineral data in federal land use decision making.
- **Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-333, 110 Stat. 4093, 16 U.S.C. § 497c):** This act automatically withdraws from all forms of appropriation under the mining laws and from disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing all lands located within the boundaries of ski area permits.
- **Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987 (30 U.S.C. § 181 et seq.):** This act expands the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture in the management of oil and gas resources on NFS lands. The BLM cannot issue leases for oil and gas on NFS lands over

the objection of the Forest Service. The Forest Service must approve all surface disturbing activities on NFS lands before operations commence.

- **Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 (102 Stat. 4546; 16 U.S.C. § 4301-4309):** Provides for protection and preservation of caves on federal lands.
- **Energy Policy Act of 2005 (PL 109-58):** Directs federal agencies to undertake efforts to ensure energy efficiency; and the production of secure, affordable, and reliable domestic energy.
- **Executive Order 13211 issued May 18, 2001:** This executive order titled “Actions Concerning Regulations That Significantly Affect Energy Supply, Distribution, or Use” requires federal agencies to prepare and submit a Statement of Energy Effects to the Office of Management and Budget describing the effects of certain regulatory actions on energy supply, distribution, or use.
- **Executive Order 13212 issued May 18, 2001:** This executive order titled “Actions to Expedite Energy-Related Projects” requires federal agencies to take actions, to the extent consistent with applicable law, to expedite projects that will increase the production, transmission, or conservation of energy.
- **The Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1946 (60 Stat. 1097; 5 U.S.C. Appendix):** This transferred the functions of the Secretary of Agriculture with respect to permits and leases for hard-rock minerals on acquired Weeks Law land to the Secretary of the Interior. However, Secretary of Agriculture Consent to the issuance of permits or leases is required.

#### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

- **36 CFR 219 – Planning:** These regulations implement the NFMA of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.), require consideration of the relationship of nonrenewable resources, such as minerals, to renewable resources, and set forth the minimum requirements for integrating the nonrenewable mineral resource into a forest plan.
- **36 CFR 228 – Minerals:** These regulations set forth rules and procedures governing use of the surface of NFS lands in conjunction with operations authorized by the general mining laws, oil and gas leasing, and mineral material disposal laws.
  - Subpart A: Locatable Minerals
  - Subpart B: Leasable Minerals (reserved)
  - Subpart C: Disposal of Mineral Materials
  - Subpart D: Miscellaneous Minerals Provisions
  - Subpart E: Oil and Gas Resources
- **36 CFR 251 – Land Uses**
- **43 CFR 2300 – Land Withdrawals**

### *Interagency Agreements*

The Forest Service has entered into interagency agreements with agencies within the USDI to cooperate and coordinate in the management of federally owned minerals within NFS lands. The principal agreements include:

- A November 8, 1946, agreement with the BLM detailing procedures for mineral leases and permits administered under section 402 of the President's Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1946.
- A May 18, 1957, MOU with the BLM describing work procedures for land applications, mining claims, and patents.
- A March 4, 1977, cooperative agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey concerning oil and gas operations.
- A May 20, 1980, MOU with the BLM describing the coordination of activities under the federal coal management program.
- A November 26, 1980, cooperative agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey for operations under solid mineral leases and permits.
- A December 3, 1981, MOU with the U.S. Geological Survey and the BLM for the geothermal steam leasing program.
- A December 11, 1989 MOU with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (formerly Department of State Lands) to promote efficiency and effectiveness in administration and regulation of mineral resources.
- A July 31, 1990, MOU with the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement describing the management of surface coal mining operations on NFS lands.
- A November 11, 1991, interagency agreement with the BLM describing the procedures by which the Forest Service could authorize the BLM to offer NFS lands for oil and gas leasing.
- A November 19, 1991, interagency agreement with the BLM describing the procedures for coordinated administration of oil and gas operations on federal leases within the NFS.

### **Key Indicators**

- Locatable minerals – acres available for mineral development;
- Leasable minerals – acres available for leasing proposals; and
- Mineral materials – acres available for disposal of mineral materials.

### **Methodology and Analysis Process**

The acres that are available for locatable mineral resource development are determined by subtracting the number of acres that are withdrawn from the total number of acres for the KNF.

The number of acres that are withdrawn from mineral entry is a matter of record. By law, the BLM keeps official records in the General Land Office. Current records are kept in the LR2000 database. These records are the source for the documentation of withdrawn lands on the KNF.

The number of acres that are available for leasing proposals is determined by subtracting the number of acres that are legally unavailable from the total number of acres on the KNF.

Lands which are legally unavailable for leasing are:



- Lands withdrawn from mineral leasing by an act of Congress or by an order of the Secretary of the Interior;
- Lands recommended for wilderness allocation by the Secretary of Agriculture;
- Lands designated by statute as WSAs, unless oil and gas leasing is specifically allowed by the statute designating the study area; and
- Lands within areas allocated for wilderness or further planning in Executive Communication 1504.

The number of acres that are available for disposal of mineral materials is determined by subtracting from the total number of acres on the KNF, the number of acres where the Forest Service has exercised its discretion to refrain from authorizing the disposal of mineral materials.

### **Affected Environment (Existing Condition)**

A variety of mineral deposit types and mineral resources, including gold, silver, and copper, occur within the boundaries of the KNF. The Forest Service recognizes that minerals are fundamental to the nation's well-being, and as policy, encourages the exploration and development of the mineral resources it is authorized to manage. The Secretary of Agriculture has provided regulations (36 CFR 228) to ensure surface resource protection, while encouraging the orderly development of mineral resources on NFS lands. Please refer to figure 43 which shows mineral potential on the KNF and figure 44 which displays oil and gas potential on the KNF.

With respect to national forest management, mineral resources are divided into three groups: locatable minerals, leasable minerals, and mineral materials. The authority of the Forest Service to influence and regulate the exploration, development, and production phases of mining operations varies with each group. As a result, the Forest Service manages mineral resource programs that are specific to each group.

#### ***Locatable Minerals***

Locatable minerals are those valuable deposits subject to exploration and development under the General Mining Law of 1872 (as amended). These resources are commonly referred to as hard-rock minerals; and include gold, silver, and copper.

Lands open to operations under the General Mining Law include all areas of the national forests except those formally withdrawn from mineral entry either by Congress or the Secretary of the Interior or otherwise exempted.

On the KNF, there are about 150,100 acres currently withdrawn, leaving approximately 2,069,900 acres available for locatable mineral resource development.

The General Mining Law of 1872, as amended, grants every United States citizen the right to prospect and explore lands reserved from the public domain and open to mineral entry. The right of access is guaranteed and is not at the discretion of the Forest Service.

Upon discovering a valuable mineral deposit, citizens have the right to locate a mining claim and remove the mineral resources. The citizen holding a mining claim is the claimant. The claimant is responsible for initiating mining activities and investing the capital required to conduct mineral exploration, developing the site, operating the site, and reclaiming the site.

The Forest Service works with mining claimants to provide reasonable access to their claims, minimize adverse environmental impacts on surface resources, and ensure reasonable reclamation of disturbed lands affected by mining operations. Protection of surface resources is accomplished by reviewing the mining plan of operations submitted by the claimant; disclosing impacts of the proposed mining operations in a site-specific environmental document; approving only those activities that are reasonably necessary for the proposed operation; monitoring operations to ensure environmental standards are met; and ensuring prompt and reasonable reclamation of disturbed areas.

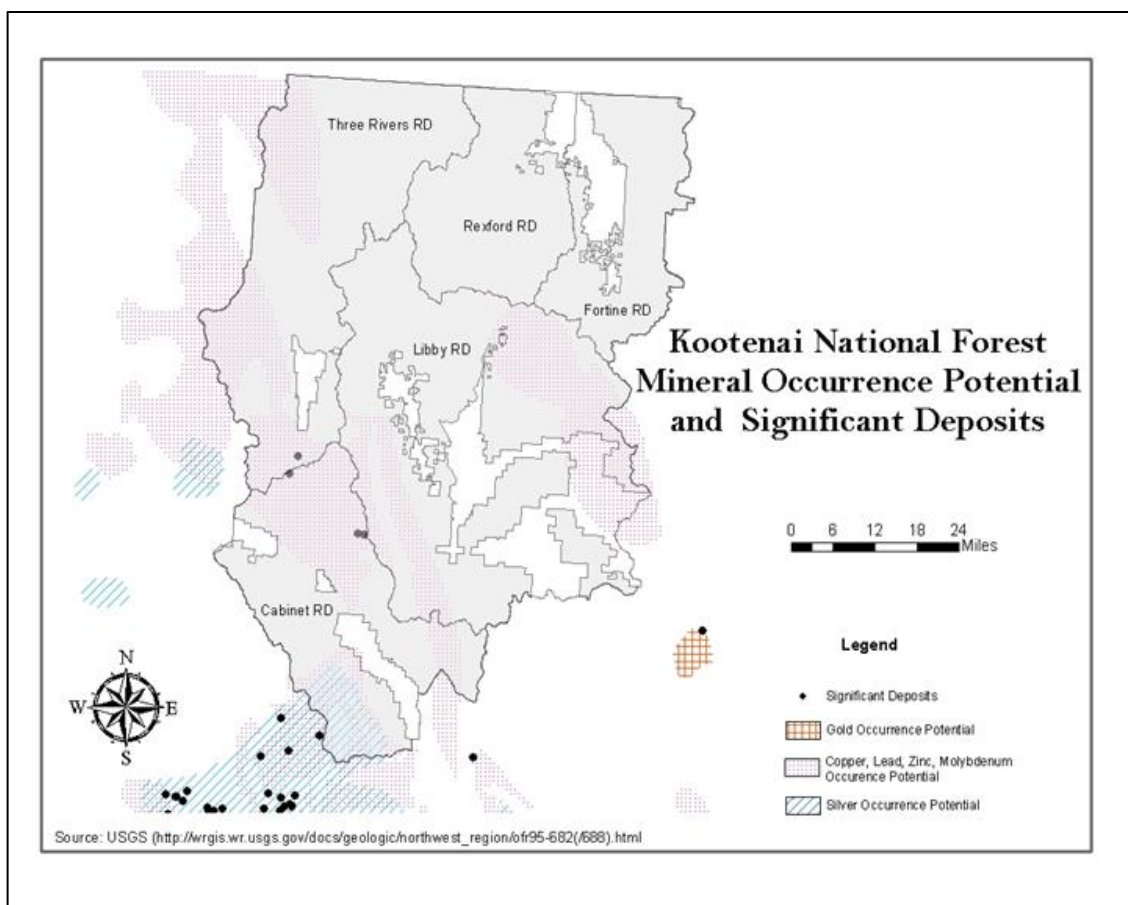
By law, certain lands such as lands withdrawn by an act of Congress (i.e., through the Wilderness Act of 1964 or the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968) and lands withdrawn by an order of the Secretary of the Interior are withdrawn from mining claim location. These withdrawn areas are; however, subject to mining claims with valid existing rights established before the date the areas were withdrawn from mineral entry. As a consequence, some mining claims located within existing or proposed withdrawn areas could be developed in the future.

### *Current Mining Operations*

There are three large scale locatable mineral operations at different levels of development and/or permitting. They are:

- Troy Mine – In production under an approved Plan of Operations. Federal and state agencies preparing environmental documents for an updated reclamation plan.
- Rock Creek Mine – Forest Service in the process of completing a supplemental final EIS.
- Montanore – Federal and state agencies in the process of completing a supplemental draft EIS.

Across the KNF there are approximately 27 approved Plans of Operations for various small scale locatable mineral operations (lode and placer mining sites). Before approval, or before these types of mining activities can occur, a NOI is typically submitted by a proponent to the ranger district where the proposed operations would occur. The district ranger determines whether a more detailed Plan of Operations is required, based on whether such operations will likely cause significant disturbance of surface resources. The KNF annually receives around 10 to 15 of these NOIs per year.



**Figure 43. Displays the Locatable Minerals Potential for the KNF**

#### *Leasable Minerals (Oil and Gas)*

Certain types of minerals, primarily energy resources, are not subject to mining claim location, but are available for exploration and development under provisions of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 (as amended). Access to these types of minerals is provided through leases, permits, or licenses that include fee and/or royalty payment conditions. Federally owned leasable minerals include oil, gas, coal, geothermal resources, potassium, sodium, phosphates, oil shale, and sulfur.

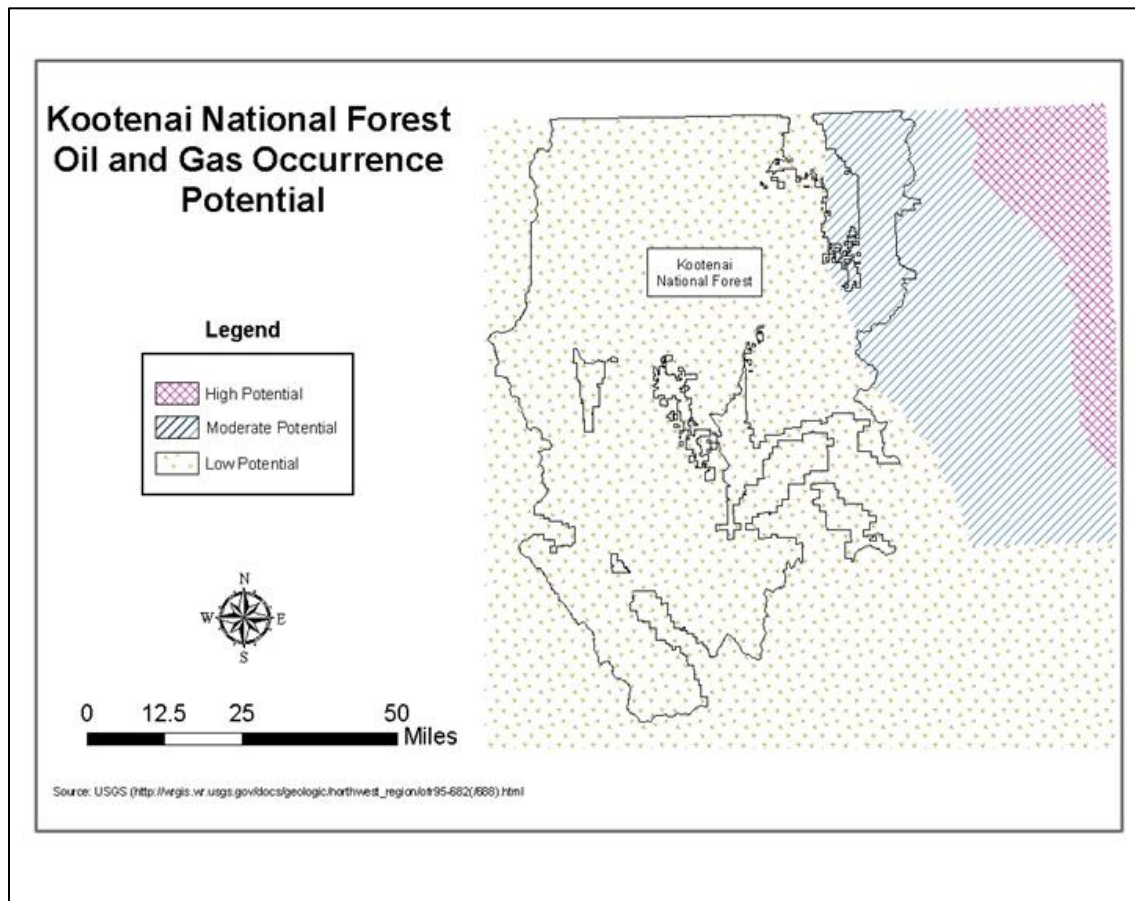
The authority to manage these minerals is presently administered by the USDI and BLM. The USDI is statutorily required to obtain consent from the Forest Service before it issues leases for leasable minerals on NFS lands.

Two environmental assessments (one in 1980, and one in 1982) analyzed oil and gas leasing on the KNF. The KNF is not proposing to do any additional leasing analysis in this EIS. As per 36 CFR 228.102 (c), any further leasing analysis will be done under a separate environmental document.

No leasable minerals are presently being produced on the KNF, and the anticipated demand for leases is expected to remain low. Geothermal resources are not known to occur on the KNF.

Idaho Roadless Area Management direction in 36 CFR 294 Subpart C prohibits the Forest Service from recommending, authorizing, or consenting to road construction/reconstruction for new mineral or energy leases in Idaho Roadless Areas managed under the backcountry

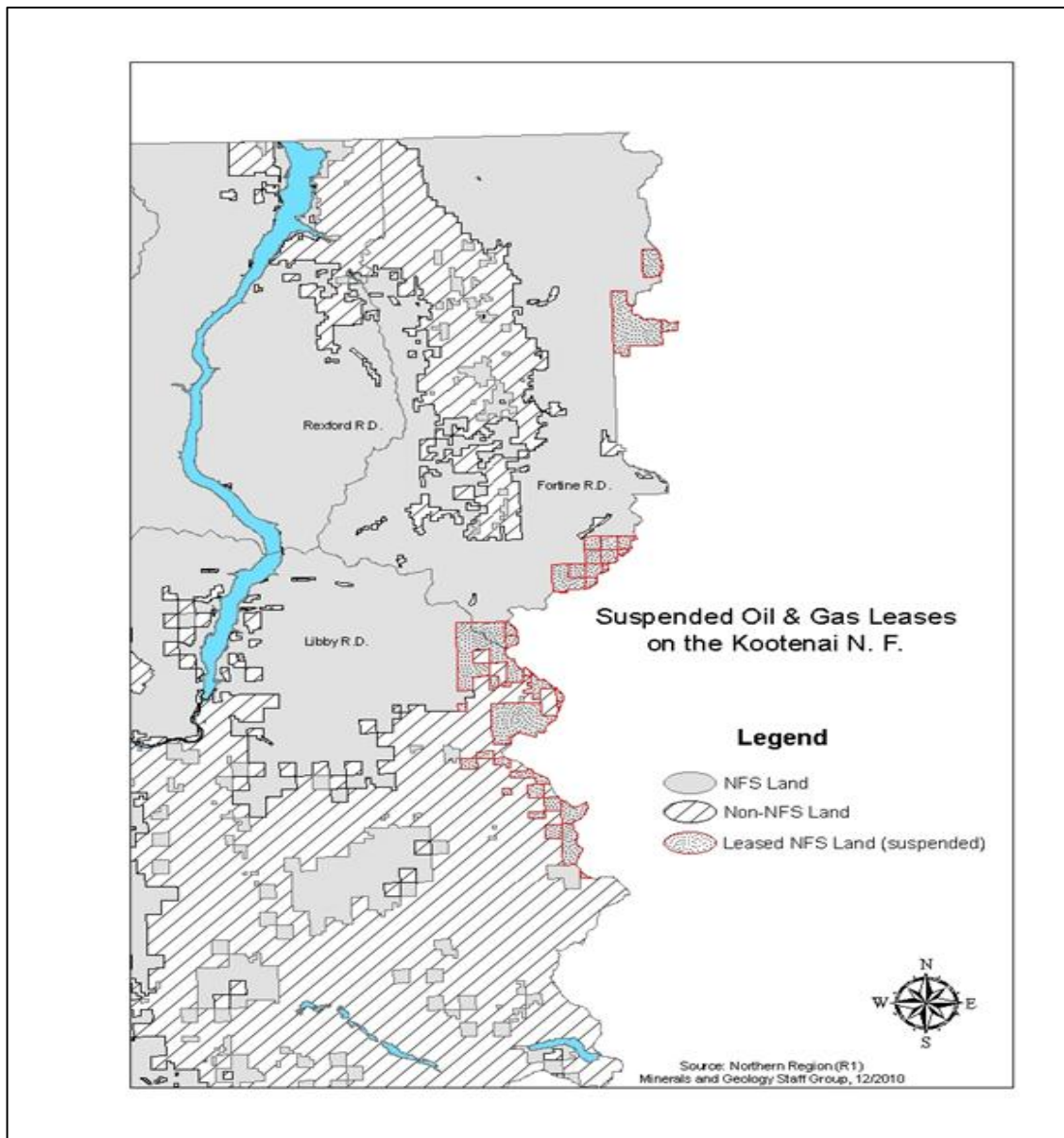
restoration theme. Approximately 35,000 acres of IRAs administered by the KNF lie within Idaho and are in the backcountry/restoration theme. Idaho Roadless Area Management direction permits surface use or occupancy without road construction or reconstruction for all mineral leasing in the backcountry/restoration theme unless prohibited in the LMP.



**Figure 44. Displays the Oil and Gas Potential for the KNF**

About 37,300 acres are under lease(s) on the KNF at this time (see figure 45 below). All leases are currently suspended in accordance with the 1985 court decision of *Conner vs. Burford*.

By regulation (36 CFR 228.102) certain lands are legally unavailable for leasing: lands withdrawn from mineral leasing by an act of Congress or by the Secretary of the Interior; lands recommended for wilderness allocation by the Secretary of Agriculture; and lands designated by statute as WSAs (unless oil and gas leasing is specifically allowed by the statute designating the study area). On the KNF there are about 127,800 acres that are legally unavailable for mineral leasing, leaving approximately 2,091,200 acres available for mineral leasing proposals.



**Figure 45. Suspended Oil & Gas Leases on the KNF**

### *Mineral Materials*

Often referred to as salable minerals, or “common variety” minerals, they are subject to the Mineral Materials Act of 1947 (as amended). These minerals are disposed of by sale, issuance of free-use permits, or under contracts for in-service needs. These minerals include petrified wood, common varieties of sand, rock, stone, cinders, gravel, pumice, clay, and other similar materials. Such common variety mineral materials include deposits that, although they have economic value, tend to be relatively widely available and do not have a distinct and special value. These minerals are most commonly used as building, landscaping, and construction materials.

The predominant salable material extracted on the KNF is crushed rock for in-service purposes used for road surfacing. The demand for quality rock sources is often dependent upon the locations of active management operations and the needs for resource protection. Presently there

is an adequate supply of rock sources of suitable quality (hardness and durability) across the Forest for in-service construction uses. There is a public demand for salable materials predominantly used for construction and landscaping purposes. On average, there are approximately 175 contracts administered annually on the KNF for personal use, public works, or commercial uses.

About 1,998,000 acres on the KNF currently allow for the disposal of mineral materials leaving approximately 221,000 acres where it is not permitted.

### *Mine Reclamation*

An assessment completed by the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (Hargrave et al. 1999) summarized the abandoned mines on the KNF and identified those sites that may pose human health and environmental risks. Approximately 32 sites on, or partially on, NFS lands were identified as having potential safety problems. Several mine reclamation projects have been completed in the last 5 to 10 years and there are currently several projects scheduled to start in 2011, including closure of abandoned portals. The remaining sites are candidates for further assessments and consideration for reclamation work.

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

None of the alternatives propose to make any site-specific changes to the existing availability of land for locatable minerals or leasable minerals on the KNF. No need for new withdrawals has been identified and no additional areas are proposed for withdrawal. No changes to existing access are proposed.

### *Consequences to Minerals from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Management Area Prescriptions**

##### **Locatable Minerals**

Alternative A recommends that approximately 264,000 acres be formally withdrawn from mineral entry.

Alternatives B Modified, C, and D do not propose any lands for withdrawal to mineral entry. There is no difference between Alternatives B Modified, C, or D regarding the lands available for locatable mineral development.

##### **Leasable Minerals**

Alternative A does not make any lands administratively unavailable for mineral leasing although it does identify approximately 515,000 acres where a no surface occupancy stipulations would apply and approximately 227,00 acres where leasing was not compatible with long-term goals.

Alternatives B Modified, C, and D do not propose to make any lands administratively unavailable for mineral leasing. Neither do they make any stipulations as to surface use or occupancy. Any stipulations would be identified at the site-specific level through the NEPA process.

In relation to access, Alternatives A, B Modified, C, and D is impacted the same by the Idaho Roadless Area Management regulations. Road construction or reconstruction associated with mineral leases may not occur in Inventoried Roadless Area that lies within Idaho and are designated as backcountry/restoration.

### Mineral Materials

The availability of mineral materials would vary by alternative in that any areas allocated as recommended wilderness (MA1b) would not allow for disposal of mineral materials (see table 136). Alternative C would be most limiting followed by Alternative B Modified, D, and A.

**Table 136. Summary of Lands Available for Disposal of Mineral Materials**

	Disposal of Mineral Materials Available	Disposal of Mineral Materials Not Allowed of Should Not Occur
Alt. A	1,995,200 ac. (90%)	223,900 ac. (10%)
Alt. B Modified	1,447,000 ac. (65%)	772,000 ac. (35%)
Alt. C	1,343,000 ac. (61%)	875,900 ac. (39%)
Alt. D	1,720,600 ac. (78%)	498,500 ac. (22%)

### Effects from Wildlife Management

Wildlife management direction in any of the four alternatives would not result in any change in the lands available for locatable minerals, leasable minerals, or mineral materials development.

Habitat security requirements for grizzly bear can be expected to affect locatable mineral exploration and development. Where roads, and the access they provide, are necessary, limitations on road construction and operating seasons can be expected to have the effect of prolonging exploration or development work. Areas most affected would be BMUs in the Cabinet- Yaak Recovery Zone and mapped areas of grizzly bear occupancy outside of but adjacent to the Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zone.

Mineral and energy exploration and development is likely to be affected in lynx analysis units in occupied habitat. Guideline HU G12 in the NRLMD ROD (USDA Forest Service 2007 March) gives direction that winter access should be limited to designated routes or designated over-snow routes.

### Effects from Aquatic Management

Aquatic management direction in any of the four alternatives would not result in any change in the lands available for locatable minerals, leasable minerals, or mineral materials development.

Surface occupancy associated with leasable minerals would not be allowed in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas unless there are no other options for location, and the riparian management objectives can be attained and adverse effects to inland native fish can be avoided (INFISH Standard MM-4). This limitation on surface occupancy does not vary between alternatives since Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas do not vary between alternatives. Because of the low occurrence potential, and the expected low demand for leases, there is likely to be little to no effect to leasable minerals.



### **Effects from Recreation Management**

Recreation management direction in any of the four alternatives would not result in any change in the lands available for locatable minerals, leasable minerals, or mineral materials development.

### **Effects from Fire and Fuels Management**

Fire and fuels management direction in any of the four alternatives would not result in any change in the lands available for locatable minerals, leasable minerals, or mineral materials development.

### **Effects from Lands and Special Uses Management**

Lands and Special Uses direction in any of the four alternatives would not result in any changes in the lands available for locatable minerals, leasable minerals, or mineral materials development.

## **Cumulative Effects**

Cumulative effects evaluate the potential impacts to mineral resources from the proposed action when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. The lands within the KNF boundary form the geographic scope for cumulative effects since this is the scope for the proposed action (Alternative B Modified). The temporal bound would be the life of the Forest Plan which is estimated to be a 15 year time span.

In order to integrate the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives, existing conditions are used as a proxy for the impacts of past actions. This is because existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior actions that have affected access and might contribute to cumulative effects.

Mineral resources across the Forest are likely to be influenced by a variety of factors, and as described in the “Affected Environment” section, there are a number of actions that may occur over the life of the Plan.

If either the Rock Creek or Montanore mining proposals begin operations, it can be anticipated that a portion of non-renewable resources would be depleted as a result of being extracted and processed. Requests for approval of small lode and placer mining operations can be expected to continue but it is not possible to predict how many may be submitted in any given year or how many might be approved. Since Congress has imposed a moratorium on patenting of mining claims, there would be no changes in the acres of patented lands unless Congress was to lift the moratorium.

Given the low probable occurrence of leasable minerals on the KNF, and the court decision in *Conner vs. Burford*, there is little likelihood of mineral lease applications being made on the KNF.

Mineral material use can be expected to continue for in-service needs (e.g., road maintenance and watershed improvement activities) and as a salable commodity and would result in the further depletion of that non-renewable mineral resource from NFS lands.

Final reclamation work would be expected once the Troy mine ceases production operations. Reclamation work is likely to occur on select abandoned mine sites as well as on mineral material sites that have reached the end of their useful life.



## *Livestock Grazing*

### **Introduction**

Suitable rangelands are lands capable of producing forage for livestock and wildlife. Rangelands may consist of meadows, riparian areas, alpine areas, or open-canopy forest. Wildlife depends upon rangelands for forage and cover throughout the year.

Livestock producers, as well as outfitters, guides, and visitors depend upon forage for their riding and pack stock. Range vegetation is managed to provide high quality wildlife habitat and forage for both livestock and wildlife.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **The Granger-Thye Act (1950):** Provides for the issuance of term grazing permits for up to 10 years. It also provides for the use of grazing receipts for range improvement work.
- **The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act (1960):** Provides that national forests are established and administered for several purposes, including livestock grazing. This act also authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to develop the surface renewable resources of national forests for multiple uses and sustained yield of the services and products to be obtained from these lands, without impairment of the productivity of the land.
- **The Wilderness Act (1964):** Provides that livestock grazing, and the activities and facilities needed to support it, are allowed to continue in wilderness areas when such grazing was established before designation.
- **The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resource Planning Act (1974):** Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a process for the revision of national forest land and resource management plans, including the identification of the suitability of lands for resource management.
- **The Federal Land Policy and Management Act (1976):** States that public lands will be managed in a manner that will provide food and habitat for fish, wildlife, and domestic animals.
- **The Public Rangelands Improvement Act (1978):** Recognizes the need to correct unsatisfactory conditions on public rangelands by increasing funding for maintenance and management of these lands.
- **The Rescission Bill (1995):** Directs the Forest Service to complete site-specific NEPA analyses and decisions on allotments on a scheduled basis.

#### *Other*

- **Allotment Management Plans:** Developed through site-specific environmental analysis, an allotment management plan uses Forest Plan direction and current issues to determine desired conditions, areas suitable for grazing, and a broad strategy on how to meet desired conditions. They describe site-specific grazing strategies, stocking, structural and non-structural range improvement needs, and coordination with other resources. The output, or animal unit months (AUMs), is a result of the allotment management plan requirements, range improvements, and the ability of the permit holder to manage forage and livestock.

## Key Indicators

- Acres of suitable range; and
- Animal Unit Months (AUMs) of livestock grazing.

## Methodology and Analysis Process

The analysis area for range is the NFS lands of the KNF, particularly the range allotments.

The NFMA of 1976 requires the identification of the suitability of lands for resource management. An analysis to determine lands suitable to produce forage for grazing animals (suitable for rangelands) was completed as part of the Forest Plan revision. Although an area may be deemed suitable for use by livestock in the Forest Plan, a project-level analysis evaluating the site-specific impacts of the grazing activity, in conformance with NEPA, is required in order to authorize livestock grazing on specific allotment(s).

The assessment of suitable rangelands was accomplished using GIS. Use of GIS resulted in consistent identification of each step in determining suitability. This process is described in detail in appendix B.

## Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

Livestock grazing has long been a historic use of the Forest and was being used to meet the needs of the area's inhabitants prior to the creation of the KNF. For example, settlers utilized horses to work their farms and as a means of transportation, while cattle provided them with beef, milk, and butter. Some families also raised sheep, hogs, and goats in small numbers. A few farmers specialized in livestock production, especially on the Tobacco Plains (Miss et al. 1994).

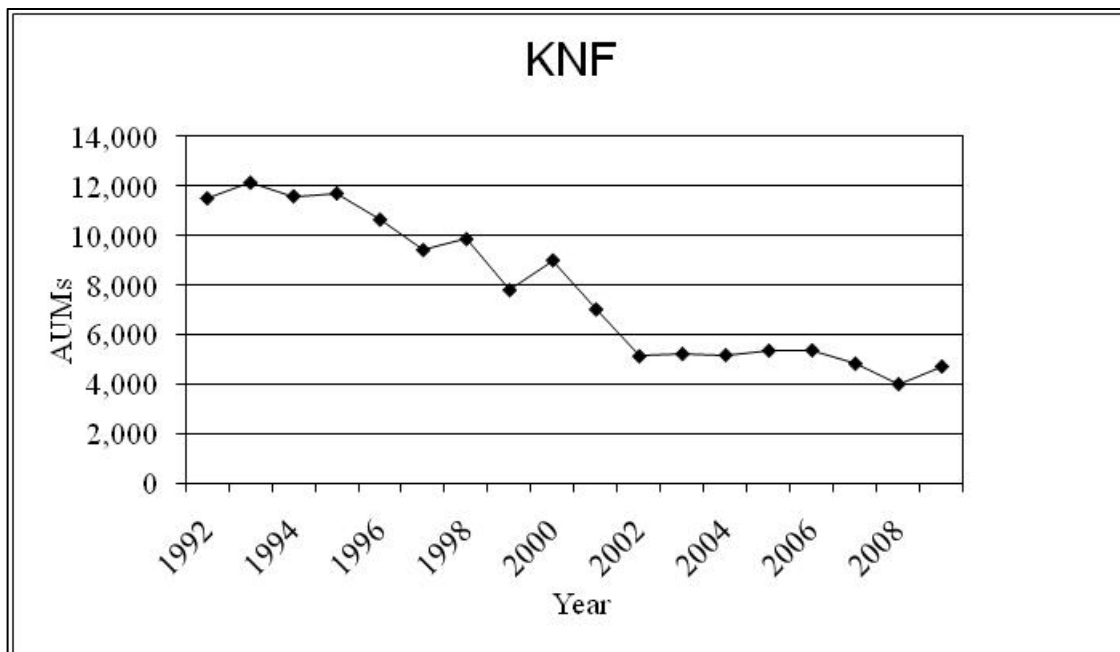
Livestock grazing has long been a historic use of the Forest and was being used to meet the needs of the area's inhabitants prior to the creation of the KNF. For example, settlers utilized horses to work their farms and as a means of transportation, while cattle provided them with beef, milk, and butter. However, limited grazing lands and insufficient hay supplies needed for wintering large numbers of animals hindered the livestock production on NFS lands.

Livestock grazing on the KNF is limited by the following:

- The nature of available range (transitory forage);
- The lack of over-wintering facilities;
- The remoteness of the available range; and
- The expense of providing adequate water and range developments.

The 1987 KNF Forest Plan projected permitted livestock use at 12,600 AUMs per year on 45 allotments. Since most of the range program on the KNF is dependent on transitory range (land which produces forage or has inherent forage producing capabilities and can become available on a temporary basis as a result of partial or complete removal of the overstory vegetation through fire, logging, or other events) this number could vary over the years. As the type of timber removal changed from clear cutting/seed tree to shelterwood/improvement cuts, the amount of available forage dropped. This combined with other factors (e.g., reduction in the number of full time ranchers, property subdivision, and market prices) has reduced the number of AUMs to approximately 4,713 in 2010. Figure 46 displays the authorized (actual use) AUMs from the Forest since the 1987 KNF Forest Plan went into effect. The average actual use for the

past 10 years (2001 through 2010) was at 5,092 AUMs or 40 percent of the 1987 Forest Plan projected use.



**Figure 46. Actual Grazing Use on the Kootenai National Forest**

As a result of reduced grazing levels, many allotments have become inactive or vacant. Since the 1987 Forest Plan, one allotment (Swamp Creek) was closed as the result of a land exchange. The Roberts allotment was combined with the Loon allotment to create the Loon-Roberts allotment, reducing the number of allotments to 43. Of the 43 remaining allotments on the Forest, 26 are vacant and one is inactive. The Fiscal Year 2009 Monitoring and Evaluation Report identifies and recommends termination of the vacant allotments: Mud Griffith Creeks, Upper Grave Creek, Seventeen Mile, South Fork, Upper Ford, Yaak River, Bobtail, Elliot-Cowell, Granite-Cherry, Jumbo-Bayhorse, Libby Creek, McMillan, Barron, Quartz, Prospect, Schrieber, Sheldon Mountain, Surprise, Swede Mountain, West Fisher, Canyon Creek, Cripple Horse, Marten Creek, Big Beaver, Green Mountain, and Tuscor Creek. The Pinkham Ridge allotment has been inactive; however, it is not being considered for closure. The monitoring report identified that no change to the Plan was needed for the active allotments.

A rangeland suitability analysis was completed for the Forest Plan and EIS. The suitability determination provides basic information regarding the potential of the land to produce forage in a sustainable manner for livestock and wildlife without damage to the soil and water resources.

The suitability analysis began with a review of the capability of the land to produce forage. Capability was primarily based on soil types capable of producing forage. The analysis then determined the suitability for grazing based on lands capable of producing forage and management decisions. Areas not suitable for grazing were identified based on other resource concerns (e.g., riparian areas), density of forested lands precluding forage production, accessibility to forage (e.g., fenced areas), and allowable uses by MA. Private land within allotments was not analyzed for suitability and would be considered only at the allotment management plan level if there is a permit request. See appendix B for more information on the process used in determining rangeland suitability.

The rangeland suitability analysis identified 921,700 acres capable of grazing on the KNF. There are approximately 149,000 acres on the KNF that are suitable for livestock grazing. This represents about 7 percent of the KNF.

Acres of suitability for rangeland by allotment are displayed in table 137. All acres were generated by GIS and may not exactly match actual allotment acres. Even though some allotments contain very small amounts of suitable acres, grazing may still be occurring based on site-specific conditions not covered in this strategic analysis of suitability. Therefore, changes to suitability may occur at the project-scale, using site-specific data.

**Table 137. KNF Allotments – Suitability Determination and Status, Existing Condition**

Allotment	Status	Allotment Acres	Capable Acres	Percent Capable	Suitable Acres	Percent Suitable
Barren	vacant <sup>1</sup>	3,985	1,464	37%	398	10%
Big Beaver Cr	vacant <sup>1</sup>	611	122	20%	43	7%
Bobtail	vacant <sup>1</sup>	4,893	3,265	67%	2,082	43%
Canyon Cr	vacant <sup>1</sup>	11,860	4,342	37%	3,003	25%
Cripple Horse	vacant <sup>1</sup>	18,258	10,004	55%	6,923	38%
Dead Horse	active	809	441	54%	357	44%
Edna	active	4,549	2,058	45%	948	21%
Elliot-Cowell	vacant <sup>1</sup>	9,437	3,812	40%	2,295	24%
Fairview	active	64,438	14,340	22%	10,413	16%
Five Mile	active	6,725	1,307	19%	706	10%
Granite-Cherry	vacant <sup>1</sup>	8,337	4,588	55%	3,296	40%
Grave Creek	active	5,414	4,535	84%	2,645	49%
Green Mountain	vacant <sup>1</sup>	870	241	28%	70	8%
Jumbo Bayhorse	vacant <sup>1</sup>	5,963	552	9%	330	6%
Lake Creek	active	6,820	3,072	45%	2,262	33%
Libby Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	5,764	3,100	54%	1,897	33%
Loon-Roberts	active	7,838	4,947	63%	1,839	23%
Martin Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	952	61	6%	15	2%
McMillan	vacant <sup>1</sup>	33,319	10,013	30%	7,410	22%
Mud Griffith Crks	vacant <sup>1</sup>	6,198	2,103	34%	801	13%
Pinkham Creek	active	53,191	29,871	56%	16,134	30%
Pinkham Ridge	vacant	18,178	13,842	76%	6,740	37%
Prospect	vacant <sup>1</sup>	6,768	1,043	15%	804	12%
Quartz Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	6,755	2,075	31%	1,201	18%
Rondo-Mud Lake	active	11,638	4,129	35%	3,169	27%
Scalp Mountain	active	25,372	13,433	53%	8,301	33%
Schrieber	vacant <sup>1</sup>	2,230	1,153	52%	716	32%
Seventeen Mile	vacant <sup>1</sup>	225	7	3%	5	2%
Sheldon Mountain	vacant <sup>1</sup>	7,936	4,239	53%	3,510	44%
South Fork	vacant <sup>1</sup>	1,020	194	19%	69	7%
Sunday Creek	active	26,526	22,663	85%	12,075	46%

Allotment	Status	Allotment Acres	Capable Acres	Percent Capable	Suitable Acres	Percent Suitable
Surprise	vacant <sup>1</sup>	4,447	1,911	43%	1,617	36%
Swamp Creek	vacant	1,796	0	0%	0	0%
Swamp Fortine	active	61,344	35,604	58%	19,672	32%
Swede Mountain	vacant <sup>1</sup>	19,605	5,163	26%	2,722	14%
Tobacco Siding	active	212	97	46%	65	31%
Trego	active	8,678	7,251	84%	4,255	49%
Tuscor Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	404	84	21%	15	4%
Upper Ford	vacant <sup>1</sup>	3,996	1,261	32%	813	20%
Upper Grave Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	31,401	8,160	26%	1,380	4%
Warland	active	8,800	3,898	44%	2,441	28%
West Fisher	vacant <sup>1</sup>	1,911	1,108	58%	734	38%
West Kootenai	active	32,275	21,101	65%	14,828	46%
Yaak River	vacant <sup>1</sup>	730	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>542,479</b>	<b>252,652</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>149,002</b>	<b>27%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Vacant and recommended to close in the 2009 Forest Plan monitoring report

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

Each alternative allows for slightly different levels of expected permitted livestock numbers. Grazing use is managed similarly in all alternatives. The forestwide standards and guidelines are designed to protect both upland and riparian resources in all alternatives. Effects are expected to be consistent between all alternatives. Based on recent trends identified through monitoring reports AUMs would not be expected to change from existing condition under all alternatives.

Under Alternative A, grazing would generally<sup>1</sup> be allowed under all MAs except: 2 – Semi-primitive non-motorized; 6 – Developed Recreation Sites; 7 – Existing Wilderness; 8 – Recommended Wilderness; 9 – Wilderness Study Area, 19 – Steep lands; 20 – Administrative Sites; 21 – Special Areas for Research Natural Areas, (SA, BOT and RIP); 24 – Low Productivity Areas, 29 – Primitive Recreation; and 30 – Lake Koocanusa Drawdown Area. There would be no new grazing allotments identified.

Existing allotments would not change by action alternative. Under Alternatives B Modified, C, and D, desired conditions for grazing (FW-DC-GRZ-01 through 03) would be the same. Grazing<sup>2</sup> as an allowable use for MA5a, 5b, 5c, 6 and 7<sup>3</sup>, would not vary by alternative. It is not considered an allowable use for the other MAs, nor are there any existing allotments within these MAs.

<sup>1</sup> See the 1987 Forest Plan for specifics related to grazing for each management area.

<sup>2</sup> As discussed in the Glossary, the term Grazing refers to livestock grazing in permitted allotments only. It does not address uses such as the incidental grazing by pack-stock during recreational pursuits.

<sup>3</sup> For MA7 – Primary Recreation Area – grazing is allowed to continue within the West Kootenai allotment.

Considering environmental consequences and alternative MA allocations, rangeland suitability was determined for each action alternative (table 138). Alternative D would have the largest acreage of suitable rangeland; Alternative C would have the least acreage of suitable rangeland.

Because suitable rangelands are similar for all alternatives, the amount of AUMs produced from lands is not expected to vary by alternative. Current use levels are expected to continue for the 10 to 15 years at approximately 5,000 AUMs.

**Table 138. Range Capability and Suitability by Allotment and Alternative B Modified, C, and D**

Allotment	Status	Suitable Acres	Capable Acres	Percent Capable	Suitable Alt B Modified Acres	Percent Suitable Alt B Modified	Suitable Alt C Acres	Percent Suitable Alt C	Suitable Alt D Acres	Percent Suitable Alt D
Barren	vacant <sup>1</sup>	3,985	1,464	37%	465	12%	416	10%	465	12%
Big Beaver Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	611	122	20%	43	7%	43	7%	43	7%
Bobtail	vacant <sup>1</sup>	4,893	3,265	67%	2,082	43%	2,082	43%	2,082	43%
Canyon Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	11,860	4,342	37%	3,038	26%	3,038	26%	3,038	26%
Cripple Horse	vacant <sup>1</sup>	18,258	10,004	55%	6,940	38%	6,940	38%	6,940	38%
Dead Horse	active	809	441	54%	387	48%	387	48%	387	48%
Edna	active	4,549	2,058	45%	951	21%	951	21%	951	21%
Elliot-Cowell	vacant <sup>1</sup>	9,437	3,812	40%	2,291	24%	2,291	24%	2,291	24%
Fairview	active	64,438	14,340	22%	10,461	16%	10,461	16%	10,461	16%
Five Mile	active	6,725	1,307	19%	753	11%	753	11%	753	11%
Granite-Cherry	vacant <sup>1</sup>	8,337	4,588	55%	3,296	40%	3,290	39%	3,296	40%
Grave Creek	active	5,414	4,535	84%	2,370	44%	2,349	43%	2,370	44%
Green Mountain	vacant <sup>1</sup>	870	241	28%	70	8%	70	8%	41	5%
Jumbo Bayhorse	vacant <sup>1</sup>	5,963	552	9%	381	6%	381	6%	381	6%
Lake Creek	active	6,820	3,072	45%	2,433	36%	2,433	36%	2,433	36%
Libby Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	5,764	3,100	54%	1,898	33%	1,898	33%	1,898	33%
Loon-Roberts	active	7,838	4,947	63%	1,839	23%	1,839	23%	1,839	23%
Martin Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	952	61	6%	16	2%	16	2%	16	2%
McMillan	vacant <sup>1</sup>	33,319	10,013	30%	7,413	22%	7,413	22%	7,413	22%
Mud Griffith Creeks	vacant <sup>1</sup>	6,198	2,103	34%	881	14%	850	14%	881	14%
Pinkham Creek	active	53,191	29,871	56%	16,670	31%	16,670	31%	16,670	31%
Pinkham Ridge	vacant	18,178	13,842	76%	6,785	37%	6,785	37%	6,785	37%
Prospect	vacant <sup>1</sup>	6,768	1,043	15%	808	12%	808	12%	808	12%

Allotment	Status	Suitable Acres	Capable Acres	Percent Capable	Suitable Alt B Modified Acres	Percent Suitable Alt B Modified	Suitable Alt C Acres	Percent Suitable Alt C	Suitable Alt D Acres	Percent Suitable Alt D
Quartz Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	6,755	2,075	31%	922	14%	922	14%	922	14%
Rondo-Mud Lake	active	11,638	4,129	35%	3,171	27%	3,171	27%	3,171	27%
Scalp Mountain	active	25,372	13,433	53%	8,538	34%	8,536	34%	8,538	34%
Schrieber	vacant <sup>1</sup>	2,230	1,153	52%	716	32%	716	32%	716	32%
Seventeen Mile	vacant <sup>1</sup>	225	7	3%	5	2%	5	2%	5	2%
Sheldon Mountain	vacant <sup>1</sup>	7,936	4,239	53%	3,495	44%	3,495	44%	3,495	44%
South Fork	vacant <sup>1</sup>	1,020	194	19%	69	7%	69	7%	69	7%
Sunday Creek	active	26,526	22,663	85%	12,148	46%	12,148	46%	12,148	46%
Surprise	vacant <sup>1</sup>	4,447	1,911	43%	1,625	37%	1,625	37%	1,625	37%
Swamp Creek	vacant	1,796	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Swamp Fortine	active	61,344	35,604	58%	20,077	33%	20,077	33%	20,077	33%
Swede Mountain	vacant <sup>1</sup>	19,605	5,163	26%	2,720	14%	2,712	14%	2,720	14%
Tobacco Siding	active	212	97	46%	65	31%	65	31%	65	31%
Trego	active	8,678	7,251	84%	4,325	50%	4,325	50%	4,325	50%
Tuscor Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	404	84	21%	15	4%	15	4%	15	4%
Upper Ford	vacant <sup>1</sup>	3,996	1,261	32%	775	19%	775	19%	775	19%
Upper Grave Creek	vacant <sup>1</sup>	31,401	8,160	26%	1,229	4%	399	1%	2,170	7%
Warland	active	8,800	3,898	44%	2,449	28%	2,449	28%	2,449	28%
West Fisher	vacant <sup>1</sup>	1,911	1,108	58%	734	38%	734	38%	734	38%
West Kootenai	active	32,275	21,101	65%	13,172	41%	13,172	41%	13,172	41%
Yaak River	vacant <sup>1</sup>	730	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>542,479</b>	<b>252,652</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>148,523</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>147,577</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>149,435</b>	<b>28%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Vacant and recommended to close in the 2009 Forest Plan monitoring report.



### *Consequences to Livestock Grazing from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

#### **Effects from Aquatic Resources Management**

Under all alternatives, management and protection of riparian areas and wetlands are emphasized. The objectives and standards for the protection of the aquatic resources, particularly riparian areas, have had some of the greatest impact on the forest grazing program. Over the last 10 to 15 years much has been accomplished through altering grazing practices to protect aquatic resources. This occurred on the KNF through implementation of INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995) standards.

#### **Effects from Access and Recreation**

The impact to livestock grazing from recreation and travel management is mainly limited by the grazing permit holder's ability for vehicle access to the allotment. Motorized vehicle access into areas allocated for non-motorized settings can be authorized by line officers. These decisions are discretionary and are made on a case-by-case review of the proposal and circumstances. The intent of the non-motorized areas is not to prevent allotment management. Some of the motorized vehicle access needs include transportation of fence and/or water development materials, noxious weed control, and salt distribution. During particular times of the year, or as some routes "grow in" from lack of use or maintenance; vehicle access may be more restrictive than what is currently available.

Of the action alternatives, Alternative D would allow for the greatest percent of motor vehicle use (82 percent) and mechanized use (95 percent) across the KNF, followed by Alternative B Modified (75 percent for motor vehicle use; 91 percent for mechanized use), and Alternative C, which would allow the least amount of motor vehicle use (68 percent) and mechanized use (87 percent) of the action alternatives. Opportunities for these types of uses could increase recreational use, which may complicate livestock management and make it more expensive. For example, more gates may be left open and livestock are inadvertently or purposely moved.

There is no effect on livestock grazing from winter recreation and winter travel management activities since very little grazing takes place during this time period. This is common for all alternatives.

Range improvements could generally receive less disturbance and vandalism with vehicles restricted to designated roads and trails; however, permit holders would need more time to obtain prior authorization to travel off roads or trails in their allotment. Management effectiveness decreases with fewer motorized opportunities for them to observe stock, check fences and water developments, distribute salt, etc.

Since there are no new developed recreation areas proposed in any alternative, the effects of developed recreation on livestock grazing would be the same for each alternative. All of the action alternatives provide for improved trail and road systems, which will reduce conflicts between forest visitors and livestock grazing. The differences of effects to livestock grazing between alternatives are minimal.

#### **Effects from Timber Harvest**

Timber harvest can provide increased forage that can be made available for livestock and wildlife grazing. As timber is harvested, it may open up areas to livestock that were not available before. While AUMs are not expected to increase, as this is transitory range and will gradually

be replaced by forested cover types, the newly available areas can reduce grazing pressure on other ranges. Under a constrained budget, Alternative C is predicted to have the most acres with regeneration harvest (about 1,740 acres), followed by Alternative D (1,660 acres), Alternative A (about 1,640 acres) and Alternative B Modified (about 1,600 acres). Based on the unconstrained budget scenario, Alternative C would have the least acres with regeneration harvest (2,983 acres), followed by Alternative B Modified (3,128 acres), Alternative A (4,812 acres), and Alternative D (5,353 acres).

### **Effects from Vegetation Management**

Management practices to trend toward desired future conditions for vegetation will rely on a variety of passive and active management techniques. Alternative C would place more emphasis on passive management than any of the other alternatives. Alternative C would treat the most acres for vegetation condition for a constrained budget than any of the other alternatives. In Alternative C, it can be expected that more treatments under this alternative would rely on prescribed fire and natural, unplanned ignitions than in the other alternatives. Both Alternatives B Modified and C have about 22 percent of land allocations in MA5, which is greater than for Alternative D. Wildfire will continue to be an influence on the Forest. Larger fires are usually in remote areas of dense timber and can sometimes occur at the edge of allotments. The KNF wouldn't expect much of an increase in forage for livestock, but would expect increased forage for big game. This could reduce competition between big game and livestock for forage.

### **Cumulative Effects**

The analysis area for cumulative effects includes all three counties identified for the KNF, including lands administered by the BLM, and the state of Montana adjacent to the KNF, and the communities which depend on livestock production from public lands. Protection of threatened or endangered species habitat may have the largest influence on livestock grazing on Federal lands. Some permit holders could be severely affected if conditions on their federal allotment require a substantial reduction. At this time, predicting any future reductions are outside the scope of this analysis, but would be addressed with an analysis if additional species are listed.

Grazing on private land depends on the market, drought conditions, and needs of the owner. There would likely be a net loss of forage, and in some cases, loss of big-game winter and spring range, as ranches are sold and subdivided. One scenario that could occur on ranches adjacent to this Forest is that they could be sub-divided and sold as home sites. These conditions could likely continue to occur in the short-term for the two major counties that the KNF lays within (Sanders and Lincoln counties). As a result, marginal winter habitat may be used more frequently by big game and may increase localized competition between livestock and wildlife on private lands.

## Special Forest Products

### Introduction

Special forest and botanical products are mainly plant and fungi materials that are gathered from NFS lands for personal use, for commercial resale, or for sale as a craft product. They can generally be categorized under five general areas: residential comfort and use, food, herbs and medicinal, decorative, and specialty items. As demand for these special products increases and new markets are created, harvest pressure on them may increase.

### Legal and Administrative Framework

#### *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*

- **36 CFR 223.1:** Trees, portions of trees, and other forest products on NFS lands may be sold for the purpose of achieving the policies set forth in the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act as amended and the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended.
- **36 CFR 223.239 and .240 Sale and Disposal of National Forest System Timber, Special Forest Products, and Forest Botanical Products:** Section 223.239 provides regulations for free-use without a permit for members of Tribes with treaty or other reserved rights related to special forest products. Also free-use without a permit upon the request of the governing body of a Tribe. Section 223.240 provides regulations regarding harvest of special forest products by Tribes with treaty or other reserved rights.
- **36 CFR 261.6:** Lists activities regarding timber and other products that are prohibited.

### Key Indicator

- Management area allocation.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

The analysis included a review of rules and regulations for special forest and botanical products and effects based on MA allocation for each alternative. Management areas with more access allow for increased supply of special forest products and the potential for over-harvest.

### Analysis Area

The analysis area is the NFS lands within the KNF boundaries.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

Special forest and botanical products include plant and fungal material that may be collected from NFS lands. Special forest and botanical products include, but are not limited to, mosses, fungi (including mushrooms), bryophytes, roots, bulbs, berries, seeds, wildflowers, forbs, sedges, grasses, nuts, ferns, tree sap, boughs, bark, cones, burls, transplants, pine straw, Christmas trees, firewood, posts and poles, mine props, and rails. These products are available through commercial harvest and sale and through free use. Historically, the Forest has granted commercial and free use of special forest and botanical products to individuals and Tribes with treaty and other reserved rights.

Special forest and botanical products may be collected forestwide, unless an area has been closed for a specific reason. Existing uses are often tied to historical knowledge and patterns of use. The most popular special forest and botanical products on the Forest include huckleberries, firewood,

Christmas trees, and boughs. Mushroom picking is a popular activity following wildfires. In recent years, requests from the general public for commercial and free use collection of special forest and botanical products have increased.

Special forest and botanical products have importance to the Tribes as traditional and cultural uses. As per current handbook direction (2409.18, section 87.13), the KNF considers “treaty rights, customary and traditional uses (including subsistence and other historical uses of plant material by Tribes), the federal trust responsibility to Tribes, and competitive market demands in determining which products would be excluded from or allowed for sale to commercial harvesters. When there is a shortage of any particular special forest product for tribal use, commercial permits will be issued only to the extent that the tribal use can be accommodated.”

The KNF consults and coordinates with tribal governments prior to issuing any permits, contracts, or other authorized instrument when there is a possible impact to tribal treaty and other rights and interests in the permitted or contracted area (handbook direction 2409.18, section 87.18). The KNF honors the unique legal relationship, including the trust relationship, between the federal government and Indian tribal governments.

In addition, the Forest Service has the responsibility to honor Indian Tribes’ reserved rights (handbook direction 2409.18, section 87.2). The gathering of forest products by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe is a reserved right on the KNF. The Salish Kootenai may remove special forest and botanical products without charge or permit (36 CFR 223.239(e)).

The supply of desired products is dependent on ecological conditions and existing distributions of potential habitat. Forest management can increase the supply of certain products. The opening of stands, timber harvest, and prescribed burning can increase huckleberry production in those habitats supporting this species. Thinning and regeneration harvest can also increase production of Christmas trees. Firewood is often a by-product of a commercial timber harvest.

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

Special forest and botanical products may be collected for personal use forestwide except in some special areas (botanical and historical special areas) and RNAs. Commercial use of special forest and botanical products is not allowed in designated wilderness; recommended wilderness; wilderness study area; wild, scenic and recreational rivers; special areas; or RNAs.

**Table 139. Acres of Management Areas where Commercial Use of Special Forest and Botanical Products is Not Allowed by Alternative**

Management Area		Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
MA1a	Wilderness	93,700	93,700	93,700	93,700
MA1b	Recommended Wilderness	76,500	102,700	214,800	36,100
MA1c	Wilderness Study Area	34,100	34,100	34,100	34,100
MA2	Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers	38,100	38,300	45,100	50,200
MA3	Botanical, Geological, Historical, Recreational, Scenic, or Zoological Areas <sup>1</sup>	15,900	31,400	30,500	31,700
MA4	Established and Recommended		9,800	8,400	8,400

Management Area		Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
	Research Natural Areas <sup>2</sup>				
<b>Total</b>		<b>258,300</b>	<b>310,000</b>	<b>426,600</b>	<b>254,200</b>

<sup>1</sup> Personal use also not allowed in botanical and historical special areas

<sup>2</sup> Personal use also not allowed in this MA

Table 139 displays the acres by MA where commercial use of special forest and botanical products is not allowed. Alternative C has the most acres and Alternative D the least acres where commercial use of these products is not allowed. Acres not allowed for personal use remain constant for all action alternatives. Alternative A has the least acres where personal use is not allowed.

The requests for and use of special forest and botanical products will continue to increase regardless of the alternative, although the allowable collection of them, access to them, and habitat conditions will vary. Alternative D provides the most areas with allowable use, the most access, and the most management activities to improve habitat conditions for special forest and botanical products.

#### *Consequences to Special Forest Products from Forest Plan Components Associated with other Resource Programs or Revision Topics*

##### **Effects from Access**

The opportunity for collecting special forest and botanical products is affected by the amount of motorized access to the Forest. Areas with no motorized access limit opportunities and reduce the ability to collect products. Alternative C has the most non-motorized access; thus, reduced opportunities for use. Alternative D has the most motorized access; thus, the best opportunities for use.

##### **Effects from Fire**

Fire increases the potential availability of some special botanical products, such as mushrooms and huckleberries. The amount of wildfire is not expected to change by alternative. Prescribed fire is expected to be highest under Alternative C; thus, the best potential habitat for some botanical products.

##### **Effects from Timber**

Timber harvest increases the potential availability of some special botanical products, such as huckleberries. Opening the stand increases the amount of sun, improving conditions for growing huckleberries and other shrubs. The amount of timber harvest is the highest under Alternative D, providing the best conditions for huckleberry growth. Alternative D would also provide the most commercial timber harvest, providing for more firewood cutting.

#### **Cumulative Effects**

The West has been the fastest growing region in the country, and this trend is expected to continue for the next 20 years (U.S. Census 2000 data and projections). With this increased growth rate comes an increased use of special forest and botanical resources. The sustainable use of these resources may become increasingly vulnerable, requiring permitting and limitation of use.

The increased population also results in increased housing density on lands adjacent to the KNF. This increased housing density leads to fragmented landscapes and degradation of habitat for some special botanical species. The increased housing density also limits access for commercial or personal use of special forest and botanical products.

## *Social and Economic Environment*

### **Introduction**

National forests are public lands that influence and are influenced by local and national publics. Local publics are represented in the communities of place and interest adjacent to national forest lands. Many of these communities were formed from the development of timber, gold, silver, grazing lands, and other natural resources. Historically, individuals in these communities developed strong place attachments to public lands that provided recreational, aesthetic, employment, and other contributions to their social environment. Work, place, and lifestyles became an integral part of the culture and social characteristics of such communities. These communities developed particular interests in the interactions of public lands with their ways of life and their economic present and future. These interests are expressed in their interactions with public lands in addition to the actions and comments of local interest groups.

National publics also have interests and concerns about public lands in general as well as particular public lands such as those of the KNF. These interests are expressed in public comments to management actions as well as in direct experiences recreating, visiting, or otherwise using public lands. Some of these publics also express their interest through national organizations with both broad-based concerns about the management of public lands and in specific resources such as old growth forests, grizzly bears, or other threatened and endangered species. Thus, they are part of the social environment of public lands through the values and beliefs that motivate actions about particular places and by their comments and actions related to these places.

### **Legal and Administrative Framework**

#### *Law and Executive Orders*

- **Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960:** Identifies principles for managing the resources of the NFS. The direction to manage these resources for the greatest good over time includes the use of economic and social analysis to determine management of the NFS.
- **National Environmental Policy Act of 1969:** Mandates consideration of the consequences to the quality of the human environment from proposed management actions. The agency must examine the potential impacts to physical and biological resources as well as potential socioeconomic impacts (40 CFR 1508.14).
- **Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974:** As amended by the NFMA of 1976, requires consideration of potential economic consequences of land management planning.
- **Office of Management and Budget Circular A-116 (issued August 16, 1978):** Requires executive branch agencies to conduct long range planning and impact analysis associated with major initiatives.
- **Executive Order No. 12898 on Environmental Justice (issued February 11, 1994):** Mandates federal agencies to make achieving environmental justice part of their mission. This includes identification and response to disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.
- **National Forest Revenue Act (amended 1908):** Requires 25 percent of revenues generated by NFS lands to be paid to the States for use by the counties in which the lands are situated for the benefit of public schools and roads.

- **Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000:** Was designed to stabilize annual payments to state and counties containing NFS lands and public domain lands managed by the BLM. Funds distributed under the provisions of this act are for the benefit of public schools, roads, and related purposes.

#### *Regulation and Policy*

- **1982 Planning Rule Procedures:** The procedures of the 1982 NFS Land and Resource Management Planning Rule requires the comprehensive consideration of economic benefits and costs, specifically identifying the social impacts, economic considerations, cost-efficient alternatives, impacts on present net value, and impacts on local employment.

### Key Indicators

#### *Social Indicators*

- Population demographics;
- Land ownership and use;
- Lifestyle, attitude, values and beliefs; and
- Communities and change.

#### *Economic Indicators*

- Change in number of jobs;
- Change in income;
- Federal payments to counties; and
- Present net value.

### Methodology and Analysis Process

Social assessments were completed to determine lifestyles, values, and issues regarding forest management. Analysis was conducted by sociologists. Primary data was collected using a discussion guide with an open-ended format. Discussants represented diverse stakeholder groups including recreation groups, business owners, loggers, mill owners, economic development staff, local government officials, Forest Service staff, teachers, environmental groups, and other community opinion leaders. Findings were summarized in the social assessments (Russell and Adams-Russell 2003, Parker et al. 2002, Russell and Downs 1995).

An assessment of social conditions and trends for the planning zone was also completed. This document compiled findings of the social assessments for the KNF with demographic data for the planning area. This document also presented data and information for a larger regional area outside the Forest boundaries. Findings were presented in the document *Conditions and Trends: Social and Economic Systems for the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle Plan Revision Zone* by Russell et al. 2006.

Various data sources were used to describe population, land ownership, employment, income, and county payments. These data sources include U.S. Census, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Montana Natural Resource Information, and the Economic Profile System – Human Dimensions Toolkit.

National forest contributions to employment and income and changes by alternative were estimated with input-output analysis using the IMPLAN (Impact analysis for PLANning)



modeling system (MIG 2003) and Forest Economic Analysis Spreadsheet Tool) (Alward et al. 2010). The IMPLAN modeling system allows the user to build regional economic models of one or more counties for a particular year. The model for this analysis used the 2008 IMPLAN data. Forest economic analysis spreadsheet tool (FEAST) is a spreadsheet modeling tool that serves as an interface between user inputs and imported data from an existing IMPLAN model.

Input-output analysis is a means of examining relationships within an economy, both between businesses and between businesses and final consumers. It captures all monetary market transactions for consumption in a given time period. Economic contribution analysis is defined as “the gross change in economic activity associated with an industry, event, or policy in an existing regional economy (Watson et al. 2007). By using Forest Service expenditure data, resource output data, and other economic information, IMPLAN can describe, among other things, the jobs and income that are supported by NFS management activities. The direct employment and labor income benefit employees and their families, and therefore, directly affect the local economy. Additional indirect and induced, multiplier effects (ripple effects) are generated by the direct activities. Together the direct and multiplier effects comprise the total economic contribution to the local economy. The data used to estimate the direct effects from timber harvest is information provided by University of Montana’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research. The economic effects tied to other Forest Service programs and the multiplier effects were estimated using IMPLAN. Resource specific data (recreation visits, range head months, timber volume harvested, etc.) were collected and input into the IMPLAN and FEAST models. For current management levels, a three-year average using 2007 – 2009 data was calculated for resources to eliminate the year to year variability inherent in the data.

Present net value was calculated using a spreadsheet (MS-Excel) and estimated costs and values for goods and services for each alternative. Present net value combines benefits and costs that occur at different times and discounts them into an amount that is equivalent to all economic activity in a single year. Costs and values for anticipated activities, goods, and services over the next 50 years for each alternative were derived by resource specialists.

## Analysis Area

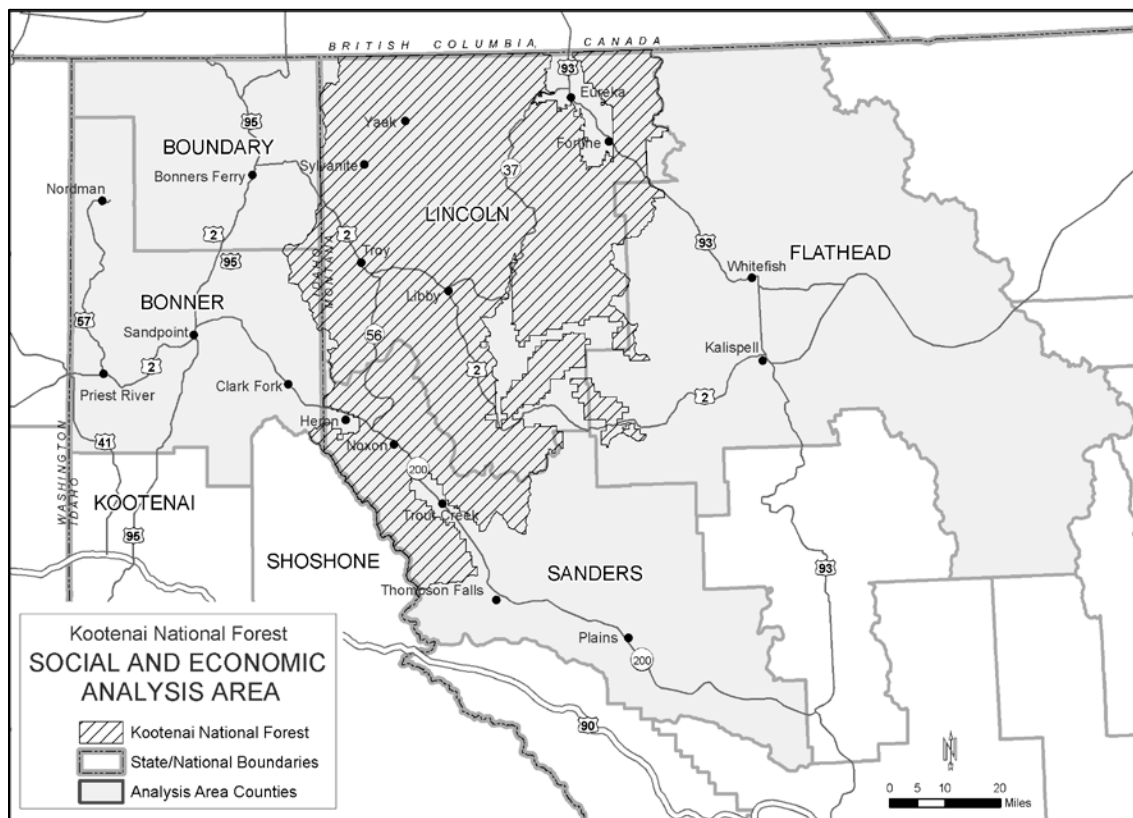
The KNF contains portions of five counties in two states: Flathead, Lincoln, and Sanders counties in Montana and Bonner and Boundary counties in Idaho (see table 140 and figure 47). As shown in table 140, more than 95 percent of the KNF is located within Lincoln and Sanders counties in Montana. Lincoln County contains the highest acreage of national forest land, with 72 percent of the county administered by the KNF.

The analysis area for the social and economic environment is comprised of counties within a zone of influence for KNF management. Counties were selected based on the concept of a functional economy (Johnson 1995). Counties were also selected based on the potential impact KNF management may have on local communities. Information used to assist in the delineation consisted of; 1) component economic areas as defined by the Bureau of Economic Analysis; 2) recent log-flow information from the KNF provided by the University of Montana’s Bureau of Business and Economic Research; and 3) personal communications with regional office and forest-level staffs. The resulting social and economic analysis area is comprised of Lincoln, Sanders, and Flathead counties in Montana and Boundary and Bonner counties in Idaho.

**Table 140. Counties within the Analysis Area: Acreage and Percent Administered by KNF**

County	Total County Acres	Total FS Acres	% of County FS Acres	Acres Admin. by KNF	% of County Admin. by KNF
Flathead County, MT	3,365,600	1,781,000	53%	49,100	1%
Lincoln County, MT	2,351,000	1,753,600	75%	1,690,300	72%
Sanders County, MT	1,785,100	921,300	52%	428,500	24%
Bonner County, ID	1,227,600	472,600	38%	39,200	3%
Boundary County, ID	817,300	490,800	60%	10,300	1%

Source: Idaho: County Profiles of Idaho, 2001; Montana: Montana Natural Resource Information System

**Figure 47. Counties in the Analysis Area**

An assessment on condition and trends of the social and economic systems for the KIPZ was completed in 2006 (Russell et al. 2006). Analysis for the Plan draws on this in-depth assessment, especially for the social environment. For purposes of description, the 2006 assessment breaks the local counties down into two categories: Direct and Regional. The Direct counties have borders within the KIPZ forests, receive payments, and have other economic and social benefits from management of the KNF or IPNF. The Regional counties have limited or no lands within the boundaries of the KIPZ forests and KIPZ contributions to socioeconomic conditions in those counties are generally subordinate to other local and regional influences.

The five counties for the KNF analysis area are all categorized as direct counties in the 2006 assessment with the exception of Flathead County. Flathead County is not heavily influenced socially or economically by management of the KNF. This county contains only a small portion of lands administered by the KNF. It is also more urban, with a diverse economic composition, and is less impacted by KNF management. However, Flathead County is important as part of the functional economy for the KNF and is included in the analysis area for the Plan.

### *Regional Economy*

The social and economic environment is influenced by a larger regional economy. The regional economy will not be described in this EIS. Only the counties directly impacted by management of the KNF are included in the analysis areas. This larger regional economy for the KNF is described in the document *Conditions and Trends: Social and Economic Systems for the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle Plan Revision Zone* by Russell et al. 2006.

### Changes between Draft and Final

Analysis was updated between draft and final to reflect the predicted timber volume sold found in the FEIS. See the “Timber” section for a description of the changes in predicted timber volume sold in the FEIS. This resulted in an update to the jobs and income figures, present net value, and present value of benefits.

The “Wildland Economic Dependency” section was revised to reflect recent updates to this analysis. See this section for a description of these updates.

### Affected Environment (Existing Condition)

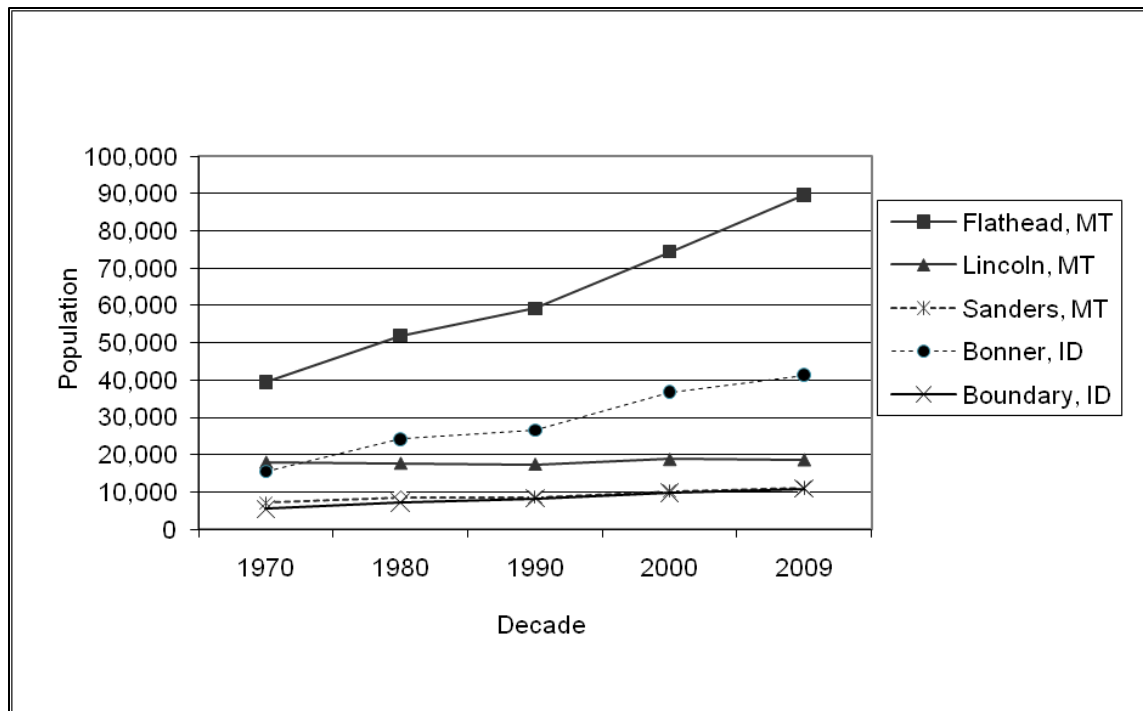
#### *Population Demographics*

The population of all five counties increased from 1980 to 2010 (see table 141 and figure 48). The growth rates in Flathead, Sanders, and Bonner counties exceed those of their respective states, while Boundary and Lincoln counties are growing at a slower rate. Flathead and Bonner counties experienced the most growth and Lincoln County the least growth.

**Table 141. Change in Population by County and State**

Region	1980	1990	2000	2010	Percent Change (1980-2010)
Montana	786,690	799,065	902,195	989,415	25.8%
Flathead, MT	51,966	59,218	74,471	90,928	75.0%
Lincoln, MT	17,752	17,481	18,837	19,687	10.9%
Sanders, MT	8,675	8,669	10,227	11,413	31.6%
Idaho	947,983	1,006,749	1,293,953	1,567,582	65.4%
Bonner, ID	24,163	26,622	36,835	40,877	69.2%
Boundary, ID	7,289	8,332	9,871	10,972	50.5%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

**Figure 48. Population by County by Decade**

The growth in population experienced by Flathead County is reflective of the increasing development and economic diversification of Kalispell, Montana, and its close proximity to the major trade center of Missoula, Montana. The growth in Bonner County is similarly reflective of increasing economic development in Sandpoint, Idaho, and its close proximity to major trade centers of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and Spokane, Washington.

All counties saw an increase in median age from 2000 to 2010. In 2010, the median age for Flathead was 41.2, Lincoln 48.9, Sanders 49.8, Bonner 45.8, and Boundary 42.8. This is consistent with the overall aging of the population in the United States, which had a median age of 37.2. All counties have a higher median age than the national average.

The ethnic composition of all counties is fairly homogenous and predominantly white, (see table 142) with Bonner County having the highest percentage (96.0 percent) and Sanders County the lowest percentage (91.6 percent). Within all counties, American Indian is the next largest ethnic group (for a single race), with Sanders County having the highest percentage (4.4 percent) and Bonner County the lowest percentage (0.8 percent).

**Table 142. Population by Race, 2010**

	Flathead County, MT	Lincoln County, MT	Sanders County, MT	Bonner County, ID	Boundary County, ID
<b>Total Population</b>	90,928	19,687	11,413	40,877	10,972
White alone	86,802	18,881	10,453	39,261	10,398
Black or African American alone	201	23	17	58	29
American Indian	1,028	182	505	315	189

	Flathead County, MT	Lincoln County, MT	Sanders County, MT	Bonner County, ID	Boundary County, ID
alone					
Asian alone	531	60	34	182	62
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Is. alone	58	9	1	42	6
Some other race	384	71	44	163	58
Two or more races	1,924	461	359	854	230
<b>Percent of Total</b>					
White alone	95.5%	95.9%	91.6%	96.0%	94.8%
Black or African American alone	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
American Indian alone	1.1%	0.9%	4.4%	0.8%	1.7%
Asian alone	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Is. alone	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Some other race	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.5%
Two or more races	2.1%	2.3%	3.1%	2.1%	2.1%

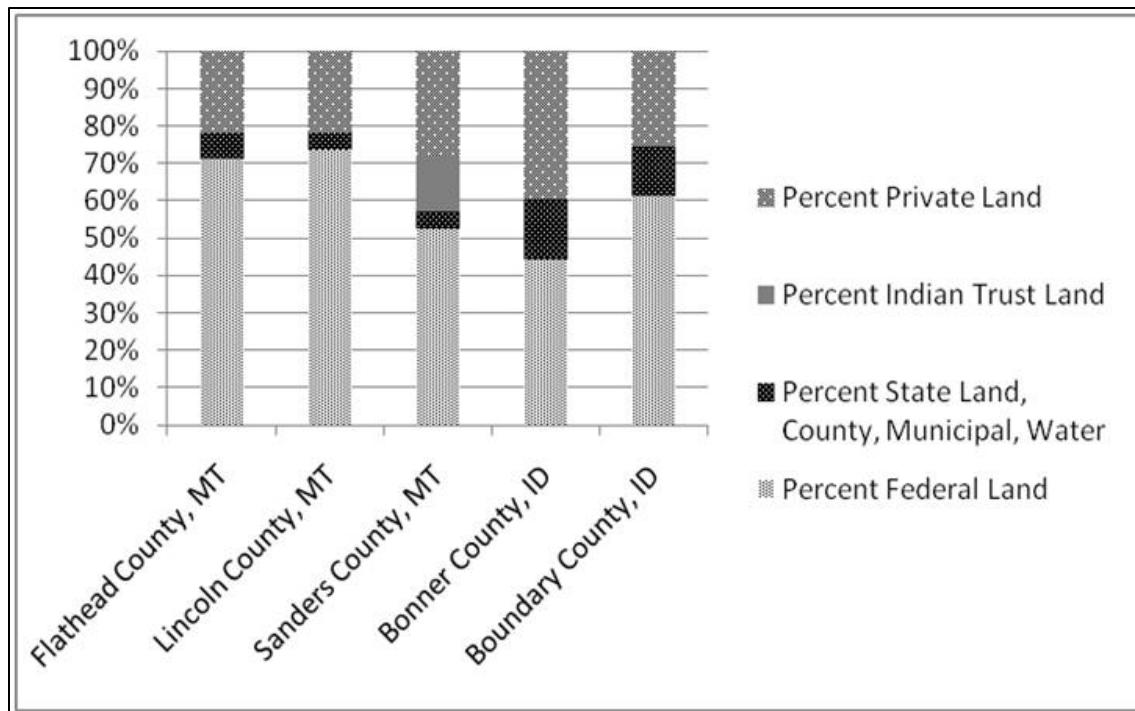
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

### *Land Ownership and Use*

Many counties in the western United States contain a large amount of federal land and are influenced by management actions on these public lands. Within the analysis area, Lincoln and Flathead counties have the largest percentage of land under federal ownership at 75 and 71 percent respectively. Boundary County has the next largest at 61 percent. Sanders County is 52 percent federally owned with an additional 15 percent under tribal ownership. Bonner County has the least amount of federally owned land, at 44 percent. Figure 49 displays the percent by land ownership for each county.

For all counties, most of the federal ownership is NFS lands. The exception is Flathead County, where a large portion of the federal ownership is National Park Service land. As stated earlier, the KNF administers the largest portion of lands in Kootenai and Sanders counties. NFS lands in Flathead County are predominantly Flathead National Forest while the majority of NFS lands in Bonner and Boundary counties are administered by the IPNF. Approximately one-half of Sanders County NFS lands are administered by the Lolo National Forest.

Traditionally, the five counties in the analysis area have relied on the use of natural resources in activities such as farming, ranching, mining, and timber production. Recreation has also been an important use of forest resources among the residents of nearby communities as well as others from more distant urban areas such as Spokane, Missoula, and elsewhere. The institution of the Forest Service has also been a part of the social environment of communities in this region since development of the NFS.



Source: Montana Natural Resource Information and Idaho County Profiles

**Figure 49. Percent Land Ownership by County**

The five counties in the analysis area are noted for their natural resources. The counties are heavily forested, ranging from 70 percent (Flathead County) to 95 percent (Lincoln County) forestland. Timber harvest has been an important land use for all five counties.

The water resources of the area have had a significant influence, carving the river valleys that provide the major areas for settlement. The many rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and streams also provide fishing and recreation opportunities to local residents and draw visitors to the area.

In addition, the area has a wide array of wildlife: including moose, elk, white-tail deer, black bears, grizzly bears, wolves, lynx, coyotes, bird life, and a variety of fish species (please see the “Wildlife” and “Aquatics” sections for additional information). Therefore, hunting and fishing have had a large influence on settlement of the area and remains a major activity for local residents and visitors to the area.

Many of the visitors to the Forest are from other States and Canada. Through their expenditures, this influx of visitors provides an important source of local jobs and income.

Lincoln and Sanders counties have mineral deposits that have been mined since the early days of settlement. The most important of these mining resources are silver and copper. Even though mining in the area has declined, there is some new interest in mining. The Revett silver mine, south of Troy Montana, is currently operating, and there is consideration for opening two new mines in Lincoln and Sanders counties. The Revett Corporation is considering development of the Rock Creek mine for silver and copper extraction. This site is located in Sanders County near the Idaho and Montana border. The Noranda Corporation has indicated interest in development of the Montanore Mine, also for silver and copper extraction. The ore deposits are located in Sanders County under the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness area, but the mine site will be located in Lincoln County.

Ranching and agriculture have traditionally been important uses of land. Recently, however, land has been taken out of agricultural and corporate forest use and put into subdivision and housing developments. As a result of this trend, the demand for land and land prices increase, assessed value and taxes increase, and agricultural and private forestry lands become more expensive to maintain and more tempting to sell for profit (Russell and Downs 1995).

For more information on historic and current trends in land uses in the five counties, see the document *Conditions and Trends: Social and Economic Systems for the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle Plan Revision Zone* by (Russell et al. 2006).

### *Lifestyle, Attitude, Values, and Beliefs*

Social assessments were completed for the KNF (Russell and Downs 1995, Russell and Adams-Russell 2003), covering Lincoln and Sanders counties in Montana. A social assessment was also completed for the IPNF (Parker et al. 2002), encompassing communities within Boundary, Bonner, Kootenai, Benewah, and Shoshone counties in Idaho. These studies included information on lifestyles, values, and issues regarding forest management. The following summarizes the findings from these studies (excerpted from Russell et al. 2006):

- Communities have a strong rural identity and value rural lifestyles. The values about rural communities include:
  - Face-to-face interpersonal relationships and knowing neighbors.
  - Personal safety and living in what is perceived to be a low-crime region in which family and children are safe.
  - Volunteerism that supports community enrichment and ways of life.
  - Mutual support for neighbors and other community members in times of need.
  - Opportunity for self-reliance and the exercise of personal freedom.
  - Preference for limited government regulation and other influence on the lifestyles and property rights of individuals.
  - The importance of the "local place" as a reference for assessing what is meaningful and valued.
- Lifestyles vary, but there are some common characteristics:
  - Individuals choose to live in these communities because of the lifestyle and benefits offered.
  - This choice often entails an economic compromise because of limited job opportunities and other means to make a living.
  - This is compensated for by the aesthetic, scenic, and open space resources of rural areas close to public lands. This results in a strong sense of place attachment.
  - Occupations have traditionally focused on resource extraction such as logging, log truck driving, mill work, equipment repair, mining, farming, and ranching. These occupations have structured the activity patterns and interactions with natural resources for many community members.
  - Individual and community identities are based on the occupational lifestyles of resource extraction such as logging, mining, and mill work.
  - Hunting, fishing, berry gathering, wildlife viewing, trail riding, and other outdoor activities are important activities valued by residents as accessible away from work activities.

- Hunting is an especially important characteristic of local lifestyles. It has some direct economic benefit in providing food resources, but it also expresses the fundamental values of self-reliance and engagement with and appreciation of the natural world.
- Attending church and participation in school activities, especially athletic events, are common activities expressing support for community.
- National forest lands and resources are evaluated as important local resources that contribute to the quality of lifestyles in the region. The Forest Service and the public lands they manage are perceived as providing a range of benefits to local communities, including the following:
  - The agency contributes leadership, organizational, facility, and other resources to communities. Agency personnel also participate as community members in clubs, organizations, volunteer efforts, and other elements of community life.
  - Recreational opportunities are an important perceived benefit of forest lands. Individuals and groups with diverse recreational interests value the available opportunities to pursue outdoor activities close to their residence and place of work.
  - Open space is also a significant value for residents who see forest lands as integral to the qualities of community and place of this region. Open space contributes to the rural character of communities.
  - Economic value exists in the resources that can be extracted from public lands (e.g., minerals, timber, and other plant material) and in the scenic, amenity, and recreational resources that attract tourists. Among some interest groups there is strong sentiment the national forest management is inhibiting community development by limiting timber harvests, which is believed to result in fewer jobs in local communities.
  - Fiscal benefits accrue to counties from Payments in Lieu of Taxes, funds from the Secure Rural Schools and Self-Determination Act of 2000, timber tax, and other federal payments related to public lands. These fiscal benefits often offset taxes that would otherwise be required to provide funding for schools, roads, and other state and local government programs.
  - Existence benefits are associated with special places (e.g., wilderness and roadless areas) and resources (e.g., grizzly bear) as well as with the Forest as a whole. For example, providing habitat for diverse plants and wildlife and ecological conditions that contribute to water quality.

The integration of community, place, work, recreation, and lifestyle characterizes the social environment of this region. Occupationally-based identities for individuals and communities express the history and traditions of logging, mining, mill work, and agriculture. These identities also incorporate values about the use of, and attachment to, natural resources that enrich rural lifestyles and the opportunity to express personal freedom.

### *Communities and Change*

Change characterizes the communities within the analysis area. An important source of change is the decline of the wood products and mining industries and associated businesses. Other sources of change include new residents, especially retirees and seasonal home owners, whose values and lifestyles are not always the same as those of longer-term residents. Retirees and other newcomers are sometimes perceived as demanding services and having “preservationist” values that favor limiting resource extraction from public lands. This increasing diversity of views and lifestyles is perceived to be altering the rural character of communities and personal freedom valued by longer-term residents. This in-migration has the positive result of generating jobs and income associated with new residents.



The Social and Economic Conditions and Trends document (Russell et al. 2006) defined and described six “community ideal types,” based on categories that linked the communities to forest management (see pages 50 to 57). These categories included geographic proximity, economic, social, and cultural (values and lifestyles) criteria that link communities to forested lands and resources. Communities were then categorized by these six ideal types and current affects from forest management described.

**Native American Communities** — These communities will continue to have strong ties to forest management through political, economic, social, and cultural linkages.

**Urban Regional Centers** — These communities are tied to forest management primarily through recreational use and the existence and amenity values of nearby national forest(s).

**Commodity Communities** — These communities are tied to forest management through commodity production or processing. Forest management under the alternatives is expected to continue to provide wood fiber, grazing, and minerals close to current levels.

**Transition Communities** — These communities are tied to forest management through the production of both commodities and recreation values.

**Diversity Communities** — These communities are tied to forest management primarily through recreation, sense of place (aesthetics and place meanings and values), and access to forested lands.

**Rural Forest Communities** — These communities are tied to forest management through the production of commodities, recreation, place, and lifestyle. This type of community has similar linkages to forest management as commodity and transition communities.

The Social and Economic Conditions and Trends document also included a table with a suggested categorization of communities within the study area. Table 143 lists those communities from Russell et al. (2006) that are within the planning area.

**Table 143. Planning Area Communities by Ideal Type**

Place	Community Ideal Type
Bonner County, ID	
Clark Fork	Rural Forest
Dover	Diversity
East Hope	Rural Forest
Kootenai	Diversity
Oldtown	Transition
Ponderay	Diversity
Priest River	Transition
Sandpoint	Diversity
Boundary County, ID	
Bonniers Ferry	Transition
Moyie Springs	Rural Forest

Place	Community Ideal Type
Lincoln County, MT	
Eureka	Transition
Fortine	Transition
Libby	Transition
Rexford	Rural Forest
Troy	Transition
Sanders County, MT	
Dixon	Rural Forest
Heron	Rural Forest
Hot Springs	Rural Forest
Lonepine	Rural Forest
Noxon	Rural Forest
Paradise	Rural Forest
Plains	Transition
Thompson Falls	Transition
Trout Creek	Rural Forest
Associated Communities Outside of the Study Area	
Spokane, WA	Urban Regional Center
Kalispell, MT	Urban Regional Center
Missoula, MT	Urban Regional Center

Source: Russell et al. 2006

### *Employment and Income*

Employment by industry describes the distribution of jobs by economic sector. The Bureau of Economic Analysis maintains and updates these data. The most current information (for the year 2008) uses the North American Industry Classification System. This classification system has been used since 2001. Table 144 displays employment by industry for 2001 and 2008.

Proprietor employment increased in all five counties from 2001 to 2008 and is significantly higher than found for the entire U.S., which was 21.3 percent in 2008. Sanders County had the highest percentage in proprietor employment (42.7 percent) and Flathead County the lowest (31.2 percent) in 2008.

The Government sector was one of the top three employers in all five counties. All counties saw a decline in the percentage of employment in Government from 2001 to 2008. In 2008, Lincoln and Boundary counties were above the percent of Government employment for the entire U.S. (13.5 percent), while the remaining three counties were below the national figure.

Retail trade, health care, and construction are also top employers in all five counties. Retail trade fell from 2001 to 2008 in Flathead, Sanders, and Bonner. Health care also decreased in all counties except Lincoln. Construction increased in all five counties. All counties except Bonner County also saw a decline in manufacturing employment from 2001 to 2008.

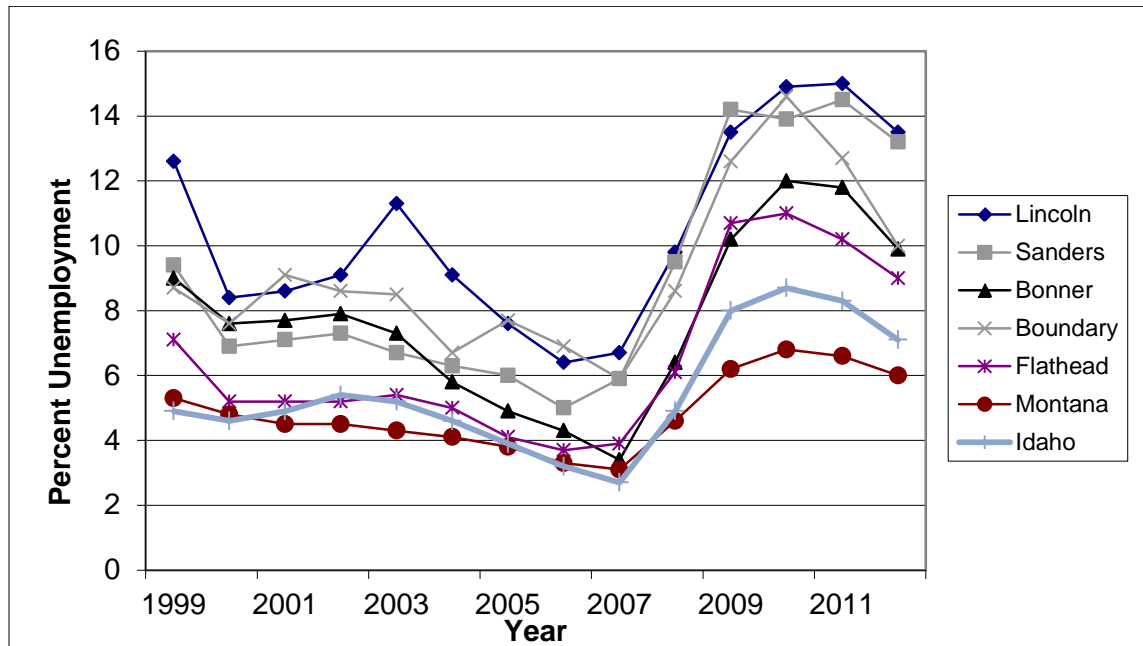
Table 144. Employment by Industry, 2001 and 2008

	Flathead		Lincoln		Sanders		Bonner		Boundary	
	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008
Employment by Place of Work										
Total Employment	50,173	63,713	8,742	9,833	5,162	5,924	20,258	25,272	5,021	5,810
By Type (percent of total employment)										
Wage and salary employment	70.9%	68.8%	64.8%	61.0%	60.2%	57.3%	64.7%	60.5%	70.7%	66.5%
Proprietors employment	29.1%	31.2%	35.2%	39.0%	39.8%	42.7%	35.3%	39.5%	29.3%	33.5%
By Industry (percent of total employment)										
Farm employment	2.3%	1.7%	3.6%	3.5%	10.2%	9.3%	3.1%	2.8%	8.1%	9.4%
Non-farm employment	97.7%	98.3%	96.4%	96.5%	89.8%	90.7%	96.9%	97.2%	91.9%	90.6%
Private employment	88.3%	90.2%	79.5%	82.9%	75.2%	78.4%	85.1%	87.2%	70.4%	70.9%
Forestry, fishing, related activities, and	1.5%	1.2%	7.2%	5.4%	5.2%	4.3%	3.9%	2.7%	6.7%	(D)
Mining	0.6%	1.0%	0.5%	3.0%	1.2%	2.1%	0.6%	0.9%	0.2%	(D)
Utilities	0.3%	0.3%	(L)	(D)	1.1%	0.7%	(D)	0.5%	(D)	0.2%
Construction	9.6%	11.5%	7.6%	9.6%	6.8%	9.5%	10.4%	11.5%	6.9%	10.4%
Manufacturing	8.2%	6.4%	9.4%	4.5%	6.8%	6.0%	9.3%	9.9%	9.9%	6.0%
Wholesale trade	1.9%	2.1%	1.0%	(D)	1.7%	1.6%	(D)	1.4%	1.3%	0.9%
Retail trade	13.2%	12.5%	12.0%	12.4%	9.5%	9.1%	16.0%	13.7%	10.9%	11.5%
Transportation and warehousing	2.8%	2.2%	2.7%	2.8%	3.4%	3.3%	2.3%	2.0%	3.5%	3.4%
Information	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%	1.0%	1.0%	0.8%	1.2%	1.2%	0.9%	0.7%
Finance and insurance	3.5%	4.0%	2.6%	2.2%	2.1%	2.2%	2.9%	3.0%	1.0%	2.1%
Real estate and rental and leasing	4.7%	7.2%	4.1%	5.7%	4.0%	6.1%	4.5%	7.6%	(D)	3.6%
Professional and technical services	6.6%	5.0%	3.1%	(D)	(D)	3.1%	5.1%	5.6%	3.8%	3.9%
Management of companies and	0.3%	0.3%	(D)	(D)	(D)	0.2%	0.3%	(D)	0.0%	0.0%
Administrative and waste services	5.5%	6.4%	(D)	3.4%	(D)	1.7%	2.3%	(D)	1.7%	3.3%
Educational services	0.9%	1.2%	0.4%	0.7%	(D)	3.1%	1.3%	1.1%	1.1%	1.8%
Health care and social assistance	8.6%	9.5%	9.7%	11.7%	(D)	9.6%	6.2%	6.0%	11.2%	8.6%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	3.1%	3.6%	2.0%	2.6%	1.4%	1.9%	3.9%	3.6%	0.9%	0.8%
Accommodation and food services	9.3%	8.8%	6.9%	6.3%	6.6%	7.5%	6.5%	6.3%	3.3%	2.5%
Other services, except public admin.	6.2%	5.7%	6.7%	7.4%	5.0%	5.7%	6.6%	6.6%	4.6%	5.0%
Government and government enterprises	9.4%	8.1%	17.0%	13.7%	14.6%	12.4%	11.7%	10.0%	21.4%	19.7%
Federal, civilian	1.7%	1.3%	5.4%	4.9%	2.5%	2.3%	1.3%	0.8%	2.5%	2.6%
Military	0.8%	0.7%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	0.9%	0.7%	0.6%	0.8%	0.8%
State and local	6.9%	6.1%	10.5%	7.9%	11.0%	9.1%	9.7%	8.6%	18.1%	16.3%

(D) Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information, but the estimates for this item are included in the totals; (L) less than 10 jobs

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis website <http://www.bea.gov/regional/reis/>, table CA25

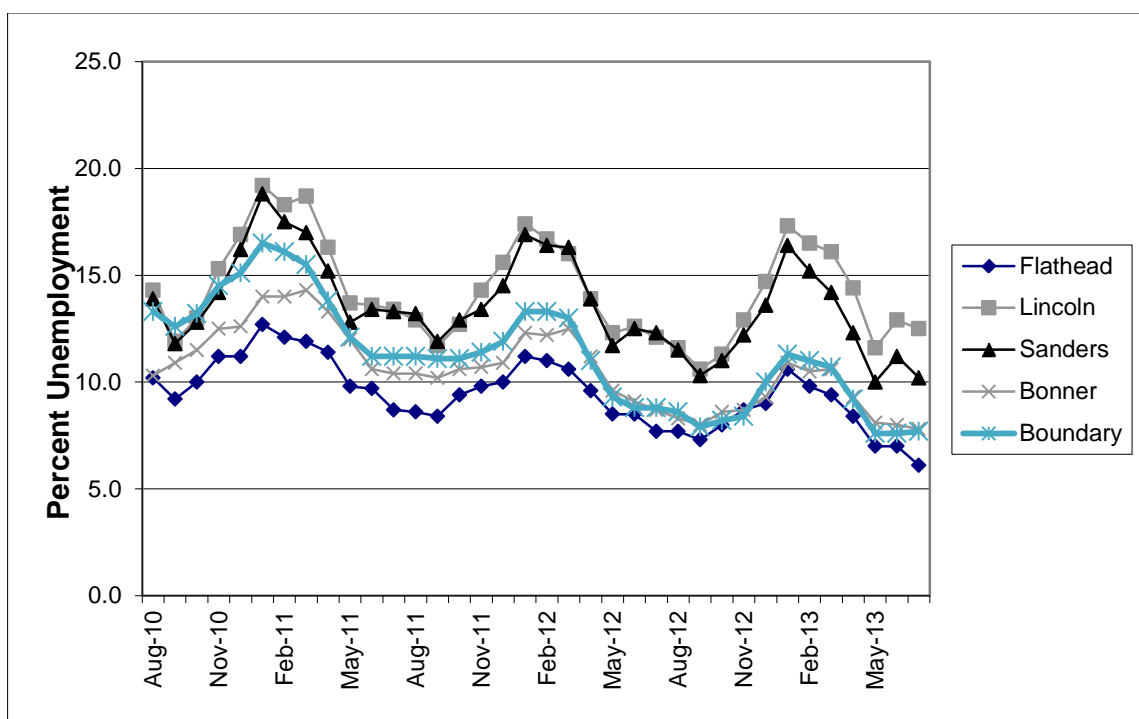
The Bureau of Labor Statistics maintains information about annual unemployment rates for counties, states, and regions. These data are a consistent and comparable source of information about county unemployment rates, although they do not include information about some data, such as discouraged workers. Average annual unemployment data for a 14 year period (figure 50) indicates that all counties show higher than average annual unemployment rates when compared to state rates. Lincoln, Sanders, and Boundary Counties have the highest unemployment rates while Flathead and Bonner are lower.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics at <http://www.bls.gov/lau>

**Figure 50. Percent Unemployment by County**

Unemployment has a strong seasonal pattern among the counties as indicated in figure 51. As the chart shows, around March unemployment begins to drop and continues to drop until about September. The highest months of unemployment are from November through April. These seasonal variations are probably related to jobs in construction, agriculture, and natural resource related employment.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics at <http://www.bls.gov/lau>

**Figure 51. Percent Unemployment by Month by County**

The per capita income by county and state is displayed in table 145. Of the five counties, only Flathead County, Montana is above the state's average per capita income. In 2008, Flathead County had the highest and Boundary County the lowest per capita income. All five counties and both states were below the national per capita income level of \$40,166 in 2008. Lincoln County experienced the highest average annual growth in per capita income from 1998 to 2008, exceeding the state average and the national average (4.0 percent). Bonner and Boundary counties have the lowest average annual growth in per capita income from 1998 to 2008.

**Table 145. Per Capita Income by County and State**

County/State	1998 Per Capita Income	2008 Per Capita Income	1998 – 2008 Average Annual Growth Rate
Flathead County	\$23,125	\$34,982	4.2%
Lincoln County	\$16,438	\$27,191	5.2%
Sanders County	\$15,748	\$25,162	4.8%
<b>Montana State</b>	<b>\$21,459</b>	<b>\$34,622</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
Bonner County	\$18,938	\$31,127	3.8%
Boundary County	\$16,728	\$24,382	3.8%
<b>Idaho State</b>	<b>\$22,234</b>	<b>\$32,944</b>	<b>4.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis website <http://www.bea.gov/bea/regional/bearfacts>

Income by industry describes the distribution of earning among the categories of employment used by the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Table 146 displays the percentage of income generated by major industries in 2001 and 2008.

**Table 146. Compensation by Industry, 2001 and 2008**

	Flathead		Lincoln		Sanders		Bonner		Boundary	
	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008
Earnings by Place of Work										
Total Earnings (thousands of dollars)	1,103,520	1,791,163	160,282	232,988	78,004	115,123	370,991	605,381	101,403	148,794
By Industry (percent of total earnings)										
Farm earnings	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	3.1%	2.2%	0.3%	0.3%	2.7%	6.3%
Nonfarm earnings	99.7%	99.8%	99.8%	99.7%	96.9%	97.8%	99.7%	99.7%	97.3%	93.7%
Private earnings	83.1%	84.2%	62.8%	65.4%	65.6%	68.5%	77.8%	80.0%	63.8%	59.7%
Forestry, fishing, related activities, and other	1.0%	0.7%	6.2%	4.7%	2.7%	1.6%	2.8%	1.4%	6.4%	(D)
Mining	0.6%	0.9%	0.2%	6.4%	1.6%	3.0%	1.0%	1.3%	0.0%	(D)
Utilities	1.0%	0.9%	0%	(D)	4.1%	3.3%	(D)	1.8%	(D)	0.1%
Construction	8.4%	10.2%	4.6%	5.8%	3.6%	5.4%	7.2%	8.1%	3.9%	7.7%
Manufacturing	15.4%	10.9%	16.1%	4.7%	9.4%	8.2%	15.7%	15.9%	16.3%	8.6%
Wholesale trade	2.4%	3.3%	0.8%	(D)	1.7%	1.4%	(D)	1.9%	1.5%	1.7%
Retail trade	10.9%	10.6%	7.4%	8.2%	5.8%	7.3%	17.9%	18.5%	8.4%	9.9%
Transportation and warehousing	4.9%	3.6%	3.4%	2.7%	3.5%	3.4%	2.7%	1.9%	4.0%	4.0%
Information	2.0%	1.9%	2.2%	1.2%	1.9%	0.9%	1.6%	1.3%	0.5%	0.3%
Finance and insurance	4.7%	5.9%	2.9%	1.9%	2.9%	2.6%	3.7%	3.7%	0.8%	2.5%
Real estate and rental and leasing	1.0%	1.4%	0.4%	1.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.8%	1.2%	(D)	0.5%
Professional and technical services	5.5%	4.1%	1.7%	(D)	(D)	2.8%	3.8%	4.6%	4.3%	3.1%
Management of companies and enterprises	0.5%	0.9%	(D)	(D)	(D)	0%	0.5%	(D)	0.0%	0.0%
Administrative and waste services	3.7%	4.7%	(D)	2.5%	(D)	0.4%	0.7%	(D)	0.6%	1.5%
Educational services	0.6%	1.0%	0.2%	0.3%	(D)	5.4%	1.1%	0.8%	0.9%	1.8%
Health care and social assistance	10.7%	13.0%	9.7%	14.4%	(D)	14.3%	5.7%	6.0%	12.6%	9.1%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	1.4%	1.8%	0.8%	1.5%	0.3%	0.7%	2.2%	2.5%	0.1%	0.2%

	Flathead		Lincoln		Sanders		Bonner		Boundary	
	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008	2001	2008
Accommodation and food services	5.7%	5.7%	3.2%	3.7%	3.4%	4.4%	3.4%	3.5%	1.3%	1.0%
Other services, except public admin.	2.8%	2.7%	2.6%	2.8%	2.2%	3.1%	3.4%	3.5%	1.7%	2.3%
Government and gov't. enterprises	16.7%	15.6%	37.0%	34.3%	31.3%	29.2%	22.0%	19.6%	33.5%	34.0%
Federal, civilian	4.7%	3.6%	18.0%	18.3%	9.1%	9.3%	3.9%	2.6%	7.8%	9.7%
Military	0.6%	1.0%	1.0%	1.7%	1.2%	2.0%	0.7%	1.1%	0.6%	1.2%
State and local	11.3%	10.9%	18.0%	14.3%	21.0%	17.9%	17.4%	15.9%	25.0%	21.3%

(D) Not shown to avoid disclosure of confidential information, but the estimates for this item are included in the totals

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis website <http://www.bea.gov/regiona/reis/> , table CA06

Several of these industries connect local economies to national forests. For example, Farm Earnings may include income from individuals with grazing permits and the forestry, fishing, and related activities industry, as well as manufacturing, may include earnings from persons in the wood processing industry. Retail and wholesale trade, accommodations, and arts and entertainment include earnings from persons who provide services to tourists as well as to local residents. U.S. Forest Service earnings are captured in the Government and Government Enterprises industry.

Table 146 shows that Government generates the largest portion of income in all counties. The manufacturing industry, which includes wood processing mills and facilities, was the second or third highest contributor of private earnings in all counties in 2001. By 2008, manufacturing's contribution had decreased in all but Bonner County and was no longer in the top three industries for earnings in Lincoln and Boundary counties. Collectively, sectors associated with tourism (retail and whole sale trade, accommodations and food services, arts and entertainment) are also among the important contributors to private earnings. The percentage of earnings in these industries typically increased in all five counties from 2001 to 2008.

#### *Wildland Economic Dependency*

The National Forest-Dependent Rural Communities Economic Diversification Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-624) defined a county as being wildland dependent if 15 percent or more of their total county labor income (primary and secondary income) came from industries associated with forest resources. Primary income is income derived directly from the industrial sectors constituting the primary wildland industries and secondary income is that derived from indirect and induced effects associated with primary income (the multiplier effect) (Gebert and Odell 2007). Economic dependency on wildland natural resources can be assessed by estimating the proportion of primary and secondary labor income generated in natural resource industries relative to the labor income for all industries. A reliable source of county-level labor income data by industry is found in the IMPLAN input-output modeling system. Primary (direct) labor income is defined as the sum of employee compensation and proprietor income. Secondary labor income is calculated by using an IMPLAN Type II labor income multiplier that includes "indirect" and "induced" effects derived from primary labor income. Total labor income effects are the sum of primary plus secondary labor income.

Natural resource (or wildland) dependency was measured for the following industries: 1) grazing, 2) timber, 3) mining, 4) wildland federal government management (e.g., Forest Service and BLM employment, etc.), and 5) recreation expenditures tied to recreation activity occurring on all private and public wildland (Gebert and Odell 2007).

Table 147 shows wildland economic dependency by county based on the relationship of labor income generated by the natural resource industries to total labor income. The table indicates the total wildland dependency is highest in Lincoln County (31.8 percent) and lowest in Flathead and Bonner counties. For all counties, timber is a significant contributor to wildland income (greater than six percent), while grazing and recreation are less than three percent. Data in the table is based on economic activity in the year 2010.

The wildland dependency numbers have been updated using data from 2010. The DEIS displayed numbers from 2000. The updated numbers show a drop in wildland dependency for all counties, though the decrease was much more substantial for some counties than for others. Some of this is due to the change in the economy in some counties, such as sawmill closures in Lincoln County. However, another reason for the change in dependency numbers is because of



the multipliers used to compute the secondary impacts. In the earlier study, multi-county impact areas, called component economic areas (labor areas defined by the Bureau of Economic analysis), were purchased from MIG (Micro-IMPLAN Group located in Stillwater, MN). Therefore, each county in the multi-county impact areas had the same multipliers. When the dependency calculations were redone, county-level impact models were ran, allowing for county- and sector-specific multipliers to be calculated. This was not possible in the earlier 2000 analysis due to computing limitations. Multipliers for a larger geographical area (for example, a state or multi-county area) are generally larger than those for a smaller area (for example, a county). Larger geographical areas generally have a greater capacity to re-spend primary (direct) income, the multiplier effect, than do smaller areas. A larger portion of the primary income received by smaller units is commonly spent in areas outside the county for goods and services, a process called “leakage.” However, despite these changes, three of the five counties in the analysis area (all but Flathead and Bonner counties) derive more than 15 percent of their total county labor income coming wildland-based sectors in the economy.

**Table 147. Wildland Dependency —Total Labor Income by Category (2010 data)**

County	% Total Non-Wildland	% Grazing	% Timber	% Mining	% Wildland Government	% Recreation
Flathead	86.9%	0.1%	6.5%	2.2%	2.3%	1.9%
Lincoln	68.2%	0.2%	7.8%	9.7%	11.2%	2.9%
Sanders	81.4%	0.6%	6.6%	4.1%	4.8%	2.6%
Bonner	87.2%	0.2%	7.4%	3.2%	1.7%	0.4%
Boundary	78.4%	1.1%	16.3%	0.6%	2.6%	1.1%

Source: Results from Gebert and Odell 2010 data set (Gebert and Odell 2007, updated 2012)

### *Economic Contribution of the National Forests to the Economic Study Area*

Management of national forests contributes to the local economies by the products (e.g., timber, minerals, etc.) that are produced on the national forests and processed in the local economy; by uses (e.g., recreation visits, etc.) that occur on the national forests; and by the service provided by employees of the national forests. This analysis is similar to the wildland dependency analysis with the exception that only Forest Service related products, uses, and services are considered.

An IMPLAN input-output model was constructed to estimate the economic contribution of the national forests to the analysis area economy. The IMPLAN model was constructed using 2008 IMPLAN data (the most recent IMPLAN data available).

The results for the contribution analysis for the KNF are displayed in table 148, which shows employment and labor income for the analysis area (columns labeled “Area Totals”) and the employment and labor income attributable to Forest Service related activities (columns labeled “FS-Related”). The results indicate there are approximately 1,190 full- and part-time jobs and \$55 million in labor income in the study area attributable to the KNF activities. This is 1.2 percent of the employment and 1.5 percent of the labor income of the study area economy. The products, uses, and services of the KNF have its largest effect in the government sector with 373 (31 percent) of the 1,188 jobs and \$20.3 million (37 percent) of the \$55.46 million labor income. The five sectors with the most employment attributable to KNF activities are government; accommodation and food services; forestry and related activities; manufacturing; and retail trade. For labor income, the top five sectors are government; mining; manufacturing; forestry and related activities; and health care.

The dependency analysis presented earlier indicated that some of the counties in the study area were highly dependent on wildland activities, with the total impact area showing 15 percent dependency on wildland-based industries. The analysis of jobs and income attributable to KNF activities indicates there is only a small portion (just over one percent) of the study area jobs and income generated by Forest Service activities. The contributions results suggest that the wildland-dependent activities are tied to non-Forest Service lands.

**Table 148. Current Role of the KNF-Related Contribution to the Area Economy**

Industry	Employment (jobs)		Labor Income (Thousands of 2009 dollars)	
	Area Totals	FS-Related	Area Totals	FS-Related
Forestry, fishing, related activities, other	4,605	96	\$119,007	\$3,480
Mining	802	72	\$63,030	\$9,316
Utilities	412	3	\$89,746	\$747
Construction	11,404	57	\$388,853	\$2,144
Manufacturing	7,014	81	\$382,163	\$4,481
Wholesale Trade	1,815	21	\$91,028	\$1,062
Retail Trade	12,683	80	\$378,225	\$2,261
Transportation & Warehousing	2,189	17	\$110,890	\$756
Information	1,329	8	\$51,701	\$326
Finance & Insurance	3,158	17	\$153,467	\$843
Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	5,091	31	\$126,489	\$785
Prof, Scientific, & Tech Services	4,528	29	\$221,722	\$1,383
Management of Companies	263	3	\$21,423	\$238
Admin, Waste Mgmt & Rem Serv	4,652	26	\$115,297	\$649
Educational Services	1,285	7	\$27,338	\$146
Health Care & Social Assistance	9,329	72	\$382,391	\$2,941
Arts, Entertainment, and Rec	3,221	23	\$61,447	\$448
Accommodation & Food Services	8,034	128	\$141,502	\$2,353
Other Services	6,514	44	\$112,453	\$783
Government	11,299	373	\$582,102	\$20,312
<b>Total</b>	<b>99,631</b>	<b>1,188</b>	<b>\$3,620,274</b>	<b>\$55,455</b>
Forest Service as Percent of Total	---	1.2%	---	1.5%

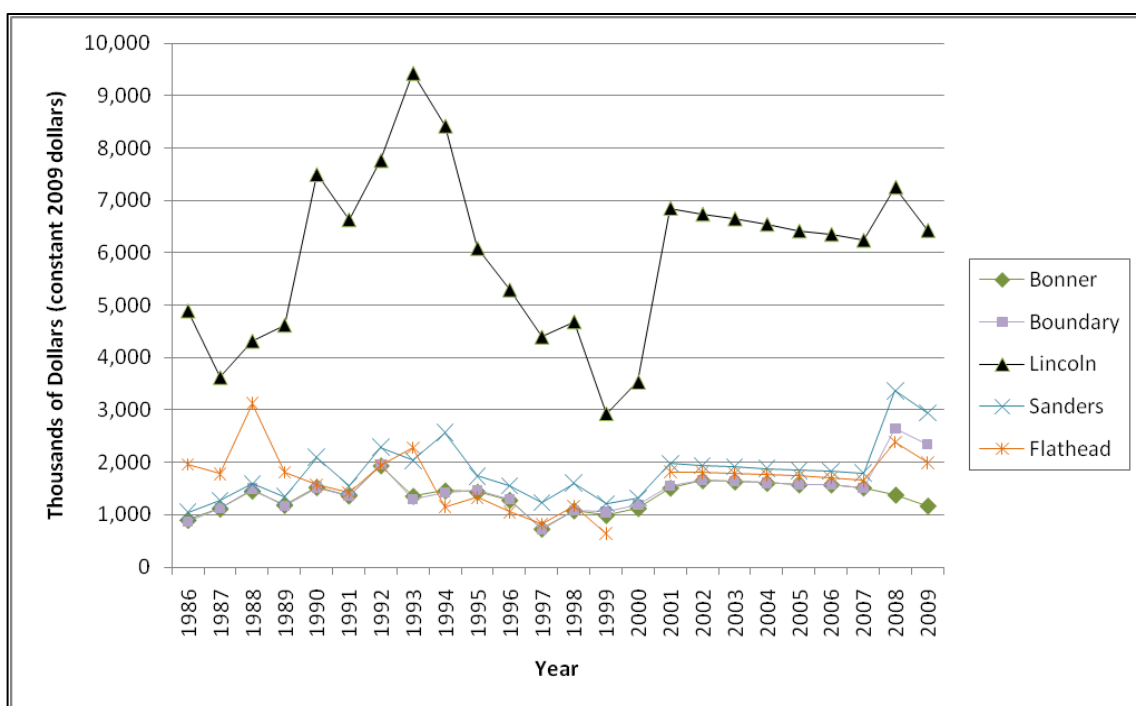
### *Payments to Counties*

Counties containing NFS lands receive payments from the federal government to compensate for critical services they provide to both county residents and visitors to these federal lands.

Congress enacted in 1908 and subsequently amended a law (the National Forest Revenue Act) that requires that 25 percent of the revenues derived from NFS lands be paid to States for use by the counties in which the lands are situated for the benefit of public schools and roads. Since 1908, the affected counties have received these payments. Under this act, payments to counties changed from year to year due to the fluctuation in volume and revenues generated by timber sales.

The Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (Public Law 106-393) was enacted in October 2000. The purpose of this act was to stabilize payments to counties. Under this law, for fiscal years 2001 through 2006, counties had the choice of receiving either (1) the 25-percent payment as under the Act of 1908 or (2) an amount equal to their proportion of the average of the state's three highest 25-percent payments from fiscal year 1986 through fiscal year 1999. All counties in the planning area chose option 2. The law was extended in 2007 for one year. The law was then reauthorized in 2008 with some changes and provides payments through 2011.

Payments to the counties for 1986 to 2009 are shown in figure 52. The graph shows the payments to counties have fluctuated greatly over the last two decades. Payments somewhat stabilized in 2001 under the Secure Rural School Act. In the analysis area, Lincoln County has received the highest payments since 1986, with payments substantially higher than the other counties.



Source: U.S. Forest Service at [https://fsplaces.fs.fed.us/fsfiles/unit/r4/payments\\_to\\_states.nsf](https://fsplaces.fs.fed.us/fsfiles/unit/r4/payments_to_states.nsf)

**Figure 52. Forest Service Payments by County — 1986 to 2009 (in constant, 2009 dollars)**

Counties also receive payments in lieu of taxes. Under the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Act of 1976, Congress provided payments to units of local government, typically counties, containing federal lands. These payments are designed to supplement other federal land receipt sharing payments that local governments may receive. The act authorizes payments under one of two alternatives, with formulas that consider such factors as other forms of revenue sharing, acreage, and population. These payments are made directly to counties and may be used for any purpose. Payments in Lieu of Taxes can be and recently have been limited by Congress through the appropriations process. Congress has not appropriated sufficient funds to fund the full payments to counties since 1994. Payments increased in 2008 under the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008.

Table 149 shows total federal payments to counties for 2009. Flathead County received the highest and Boundary County the lowest payments in lieu of taxes. Lincoln County has the highest total federal payments.

**Table 149. Federal Land Payments to Analysis Area Counties, 2009**

	Flathead County, MT	Lincoln County, MT	Sanders County, MT	Bonner County, ID	Boundary County, ID
Total Federal Land Payments by Geography of Origin (\$)	4,248,027	7,003,860	3,243,246	1,463,137	2,551,205
PILT	2,253,122	570,558	298,584	289,913	210,551
Forest Service Payments	1,994,905	6,433,277	2,944,657	1,174,639	2,340,554
BLM Payments	0	25	5	-1,415	100

Source: U.S. Department of Interior, 2009. Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), Washington D.C.; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2009. Forest Service, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Interior, 2009. Bureau of Land Management, Washington, D.C.

The contribution of federal land payments to county budgets is illustrated in table 150. Lincoln County is the most affected by the payments to government, with almost 25 percent of the county revenues generated by federal land payments. Bonner and Flathead counties are the least affected, with less than 5 percent of their county revenue generated by federal land payments.

**Table 150. Federal Land Payments as a Share of Total General Government Revenue, FY2007 (2009 dollars)**

	Flathead County, MT	Lincoln County, MT	Sanders County, MT	Bonner County, ID	Boundary County, ID
<b>Total General Revenue</b>	59,997	16,337	10,768	35,989	19,726
Taxes	34,012	5,912	5,752	19,609	3,989
Intergovernmental Revenue	9,965	6,392	3,202	8,337	4,713
Total Charges	12,809	2,496	1,152	5,932	10,556
All Other (Miscellaneous)	3,212	1,537	662	2,112	468
Federal Land Payments (FY 2006)	2,401	4,072	1,284	1,034	1,064
<b>Percent of Total</b>					
Taxes	56.7%	36.2%	53.4%	54.5%	20.2%
Intergovernmental Revenue	16.6%	39.1%	29.7%	23.2%	23.9%
Total Charges	21.3%	15.3%	10.7%	16.5%	53.5%
All Other (Miscellaneous)	5.4%	9.4%	6.1%	5.9%	2.4%
Federal Land Payments (FY 2006)	4.0%	24.9%	11.9%	2.9%	5.4%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 2009. Census of Governments Survey of State and Local Government Finances, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Interior, 2006. Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), Washington D.C.; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2006. Forest Service, Washington, D.C.; U.S. Department of Interior, 2006. Bureau of Land Management, Washington, D.C.

## Environmental Consequences

### *General Effects*

The KNF provides a variety of uses, values, benefits, products, services, and visitor opportunities (termed “outputs and values”). Under all alternatives, these outputs and values will be provided in a sustainable manner, supplying outputs and values for current and future generations. These outputs and values contribute to the sustainability of the social and economic systems within the analysis area.

While the analysis area is affected by the management activities, uses, and outputs of the KNF, there are also many external factors that affect local counties and communities. These external factors include national and regional population trends, national trade agreements, state and national laws and regulations, technological advances in manufacturing, technological advances in recreation equipment, cultural trends, and changes in societal values. These external factors often have a larger impact on the social and economic environment than does management of the KNF. This section addresses the potential effects from KNF management decisions from the alternatives.

### *Population*

Population is not expected to vary by alternative. Current trends are expected to continue over the life of the Plan, with slower population growth in Lincoln, Sanders, and Boundary counties and faster growth in Flathead and Bonner counties.

### *Land Ownership and Use*

Land ownership is not expected to change under any alternative. There may be some land exchanges in the future, but it is not expected to result in any net increase in lands administered by the KNF. Any future land exchanges or sales would be assessed to determine specific impacts.

Some land uses will vary by alternative. Timber harvest levels vary based on MA allocation and management intensity as determined by the theme of the alternative. See chapter 2 for a description of the alternatives. Total recreation numbers are not expected to change by alternative, but the opportunities and quality of the experiences may vary. Acres and miles available for motor vehicle use (except for over-snow vehicle use) do not change by alternative. Opportunities for over-snow vehicle use vary by alternative. Mining and grazing uses do not change by alternative.

Alternative C has the greatest amount of land in recommended wilderness, with an emphasis on backcountry, non-motorized recreation. This alternative has the least amount of active management, with the lowest timber harvest level. Alternative B Modified has the second highest amount of land in recommended wilderness and non-motorized recreation, with the second lowest timber harvest level. Alternative D has the greatest amount of land in general forest management, with an emphasis on timber harvest and motorized recreation. This alternative has the least amount of recommended wilderness and backcountry uses, with the highest timber harvest level. Alternative A has the second lowest amount of land in recommended wilderness and the second highest timber harvest level and motorized recreation opportunities.

### *Lifestyles, Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs*

The outputs and values provided by the KNF contribute to the quality of lifestyles found in the planning area. Some of these outputs and values vary by alternative.

For those valuing timber harvest or having a lifestyle that is tied to the logging or manufacturing industries, the alternative with the most timber harvest would add to their quality of life more than those alternatives with lower timber harvest levels. Alternative D provides the highest, Alternatives A and B Modified the next highest levels, while Alternative C provides the lowest amount of timber harvest.

Although total recreation use numbers are not expected to change by alternative, opportunities for specific types of recreation and the quality of the experience will vary based on management allocation and the emphasis of the alternative. For those valuing non-motorized and wilderness recreation, the existence of special places, scenery and open spaces, the alternative with the most recommended wilderness and backcountry MAs would add to their quality of life more than the other alternatives. Alternative C provides the greatest opportunity for these types of values, followed by Alternative B Modified and A. Alternative D provides the least opportunity for these types of values.

For those valuing motorized recreation opportunities, the alternative with the most general forest and motorized backcountry MAs would add to their quality of life more than other alternatives. Alternative D provides the most opportunity for this type of recreation, followed by Alternative A and B Modified. Alternative C provides the least opportunity for this type of recreation.

### *Communities and Change*

As described above, an important source of change in the communities within the analysis area has been a decline in the wood products industries. Alternative D would provide for the most timber harvest, which may help to slow some of this change. Alternative C would provide the least amount of timber harvest; and thus, may result in increased change.

The following is a description of the trends expected under the alternatives for the six community types (as described in the “Affected Environment”):

**Native American Communities** – Under all alternatives, forest managers are expected to continue to coordinate with and provide for Native American rights and interests.

**Urban Regional Centers** – Forest management under the alternatives is expected to continue to provide for a variety of recreational opportunities, at or above current levels, as well as other amenities such as scenery and solitude. The types of recreation opportunities vary under alternatives, with Alternative C providing for the greatest amount of non-motorized recreation and least amount of motorized recreation opportunities. Alternative D provides the most motorized recreation and the least amount of non-motorized recreation opportunities. Some decrease in the quality of recreational experiences may occur as populations increase, causing crowding of popular sites. These urban regional centers are expected to continue to expand, diversify, and grow into the future.

**Commodity Communities** – Forest management under the alternatives is expected to continue to provide wood fiber, grazing, and minerals close to current levels. Alternative D would provide the highest level of commodity production and Alternative C the lowest level. These communities are expected to continue to change as new residents move in, bringing different attitudes, values, and beliefs. This change in community values, beliefs, and identities

creates social tension related to resource management issues. These communities are expected to evolve into Transition Communities (described below) as their populations and businesses change.

**Transition Communities** – Forest management under the alternatives is expected to continue to provide commodities and recreation opportunities close to current levels. Alternative D would provide the highest level of access and commodity production and Alternative C the lowest levels. Access to the Forest will continue to be an issue and source of conflict, with a desire by some for more access, a desire by others for less, and resource concerns limiting management decisions. The ability to increase access opportunities will remain limited under all alternatives. These communities will continue to undergo a great deal of change, as populations and businesses diversify, and economic structures, patterns of use, and values about forest resources change.

**Diversity Communities** – Forest management under the alternatives is expected to continue to provide a variety of recreational opportunities at or above current levels. The types of recreation opportunities vary under alternatives, with Alternative C providing for the greatest amount of non-motorized recreation and least amount of motorized recreation opportunities. Alternative D provides the most motorized recreation and the least amount of non-motorized recreation opportunities. Access will continue to be a management challenge under the alternatives, with limited or no ability to provide increased opportunities due to other resource concerns. Changes in access may occur to specific areas, roads, or trails. Due to their economic and social diversity, these communities more easily able to adapt to changing conditions with increased population and forest management than Transition or Commodity communities.

**Rural Forest Communities** – Outcomes under the alternatives would be similar to Commodity and Transition communities, with commodity and recreation use close to current levels for all alternatives and highest under Alternative D. New residents to these communities will continue to affect change through a diversification of attitudes, values, and beliefs.

### *Employment and Income*

Local employment and income is affected by changes in outputs and uses on the Forest. As described in the “Methodologies” section above, the IMPLAN modeling system was used to estimate changes to jobs and income from expected output and use levels for each alternative. Economic effects were predicted with and without extension of county payments under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

Although the differences between the alternatives in many cases are relatively small, the impacts may be considerable to individuals, families, or businesses. In very small communities, the loss of a single job may be very important, yet negligible across the analysis area.

Table 151 displays the employment and table 152 the income associated with KNF management for the five-county analysis area by alternative. These tables compare the alternatives to current levels of employment and income.

**Table 151. Employment by Program for Current Management and by Alternative (average annual, decade 1)**

Resource	Current Mgmt	Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Recreation: non-local only	122	138	138	138	138

Resource	Current Mgmt	Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Wildlife and Fish: non-local only	68	77	77	77	77
Grazing	4	4	4	4	4
Timber	210	496	463	361	496
Minerals	157	157	157	157	157
Payments to States/Counties	139	139	139	139	139
Forest Service Expenditures	488	488	488	488	488
<b>Total Forest Management</b>	<b>1,188</b>	<b>1,499</b>	<b>1,467</b>	<b>1,365</b>	<b>1,499</b>
Percent Change from Current		26.1%	23.4%	14.8%	26.1%

**Table 152. Labor Income by Program for Current Management and by Alternative (average annual, decade 1; Thousands of Dollars)**

Resource	Current Mgmt	Alt A	Alt B Modified	Alt C	Alt D
Recreation: non-local only	\$3,203	\$3,619	\$3,619	\$3,619	\$3,619
Wildlife and Fish: non-local only	\$1,928	\$2,178	\$2,178	\$2,178	\$2,178
Grazing	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$36
Timber	\$9,666	\$23,260	\$21,745	\$16,948	\$23,260
Minerals	\$12,462	\$12,462	\$12,462	\$12,462	\$12,462
Payments to States/Counties	\$4,938	\$4,938	\$4,938	\$4,938	\$4,938
Forest Service Expenditures	\$23,223	\$23,223	\$23,223	\$23,223	\$23,223
<b>Total Forest Management</b>	<b>\$55,455</b>	<b>\$69,716</b>	<b>\$68,201</b>	<b>\$63,404</b>	<b>\$69,716</b>
Percent Change from Current	---	25.7%	23.0%	14.3%	25.7%

The largest difference between the alternatives and the current amounts is based on changes to timber. The timber output for current management is an average of the amount that was harvested in fiscal years 2007, 2008, and 2009. Timber harvest during this time period was very low because of poor market conditions following the decline in the housing market. For the alternatives, the timber output is the average annual first decade timber sold as modeled in Spectrum. The timber sold level for the alternatives is similar to the amount of timber sold over the last 5 years. See the “Timber” section in chapter 3 and appendix B for more information on the modeling and results for predicted timber volume sold.

Recreation, wildlife, and fish outputs are constant for all alternatives. Levels are expected to increase by 13 percent over current levels based on expected population growth over the next 10 years in the western U.S. (2000 U.S. Census data, Population Projections table 6).

Grazing and minerals are constant for current management and all alternatives. Decisions made in the Forest Plan are not expected to change grazing or mineral output levels, so these levels remained constant. Forest Service Expenditures also remain constant for all alternatives because the analysis on output levels was conducted with the assumption that current level of budgets would continue under the Forest Plan.

Payments to state/counties remains constant for current management and all alternatives based on expected continuation of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. Under this act, forest management does not affect federal payments to states and counties. An



analysis was conducted to determine the effect if this act was not extended and payments reverted to the 25 percent Payments. If this was to occur, employment would be decreased by approximately 110 jobs and \$4,000,000 in labor income in all alternatives.

### *Payments to Counties*

KNF management will not affect payments to counties if the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act is reauthorized into the future. However, if this act expires and no other act replaces it, payments would revert to 25 percent Payments (as under the National Forest Revenue Act of 1908). If this were the case, payments to counties would be greatly diminished from current levels. Alternatives providing the highest level of receipts would provide the highest amount of payments to counties. Alternatives A and C would provide the highest while Alternatives B Modified and D would provide the lowest levels of payments to counties and states. The 25 percent Payments for the five-county area are estimated to range from a high of \$1,671,000 under Alternative C to a low of \$1,545,000 under Alternative D. The current level of payments associated with the KNF for the five-county area is \$7,860,000 under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. A return to 25 percent Payments would result in a large reduction in payments to counties. Affects would be greatest in those counties where federal payments are a larger portion of the county budget, such as Lincoln County.

Payments from payment in lieu of taxes may increase under reduced Forest Service payments to counties, depending on appropriations from Congress. The amount of increase is unknown, but would generally be insufficient to offset the reduction in Forest Service payments under the 25 percent Payments.

### *Economic Efficiency*

The main criterion used in assessing economic efficiency is present net value, which is defined as the value of discounted benefits minus discounted costs. A present net value analysis includes all outputs, including timber, grazing, recreation, and minerals, to which monetary values are assigned. The monetary values include both market and nonmarket values. See appendix B for a description of these values and the economic analysis.

Table 153 shows estimated benefits, costs, and cumulative present net value by alternative. All monetary values are expressed in constant dollars with no allowance for inflation. A 4 percent discount rate was used over a fifty-year period (2014 – 2063). The reduction in present net value in any alternative as compared to the most economically efficient solution is the economic trade-off, or opportunity cost, of implementing that alternative.

**Table 153. Economic Efficiency by Alternative (in thousands of dollars)**

	Alt. A	Alt. B Modified	Alt. C	Alt. D
Present Net Value	\$1,390,261	\$1,384,369	\$1,391,150	\$1,382,820
Present Value of Benefits	\$1,865,443	\$1,859,551	\$1,866,333	\$1,858,002
Present Value of Costs	\$475,182	\$475,182	\$475,182	\$475,182

The Forest Service budget was held constant at current levels for all alternatives. The amount of benefits changed by alternative based on the amount and type of timber that was projected to be harvested over the next 50 years. The present net value is positive for all alternatives, indicating the alternatives are economically efficient. The alternative with the highest present net value is

Alternative C and the alternative with the lowest present net value is Alternative D. However, as table 153 indicates, differences between alternatives for present net value are slight.

When evaluating trade-offs, the use of present net value and net public benefit is often misunderstood. In each alternative, present net value was maximized in an attempt to ensure that the alternative would be efficient in its use of tax dollars and land. The present net value coupled with indicators for Forest Plan goals (such as contributing to the social and economic well-being of local communities, moving vegetation toward desired conditions, and improving the capability of the Forest to provide high-quality recreation opportunities) can be used to estimate net public benefits, compare alternatives, and assist in choosing a preferred alternative.

### Cumulative Effects

There are many factors that influence and affect the local social and economic environment. National, state, and county policies affect population growth, demographics, and land uses. Following is a brief description of some items that are changing or may change in the future, adding to the effects on local communities from the alternatives.

#### *Population Growth*

The West has been the fastest growing region in the country, and this trend is expected to continue for the next 20 years (U.S. Census 2000 data and projections). With this increased growth rate comes an increased diversification of the population. More new residents are migrating in, while the adult children of families living in the region are moving out of the area to find employment. This change in population composition has added to the diversity of attitudes, lifestyles, and values of the population within the planning area. The social assessment for the KNF found there is a concern among some stakeholders that new residents are changing the nature of their communities. The new residents have different values about the use of natural resources in general and the harvesting of timber in particular (Russell and Downs 1995:311).

#### *Development of Forestlands*

There has also been increased housing density adjacent to and within national forest boundaries, and this trend is expected to continue over the next several decades. Moderate and high increases in residential development are projected around national forests located in Montana and Idaho (Stein et al. 2007). While local urban, county, and regional planners and the public are making progress in defining desirable development and recognizing the inherent costs and effects associated with subdivision sprawl, growth will continue in some form and overall density will increase. This development would likely add pressure on adjacent Forest Service lands. Pressure would include increased demand for potentially conflicting recreation opportunities, services such as road maintenance, demand for undeveloped and semi-primitive settings, and increased fire management problems.

#### *Subdividing Corporate Timberlands*

Montana, like many states across the West, is experiencing a massive divestiture of commercial timberlands for development and subdivisions (Montana DNRC 2010). Corporate timberland has become more valuable for recreational or residential real estate than for timber production. This development results in increased fragmentation of forested landscapes with increasing ex-urban migration and greater desire for recreational properties and other amenity values. Impacts of fragmentation include wildlife habitat degradation, public access issues, and increased challenges of providing public services and fire protection for new housing developments. This

divestiture of corporate timberlands adds to the current trends for increased housing density within and adjacent to the national forest.

#### *Future Mining or Wood Products Development*

Diversification of wood product manufacturing has historically allowed Montana mills to be more resilient in changing markets (Montana DNRC 2010). The majority of timber harvested in Montana comes off private lands, with one-third from non-industrial private lands. The Montana Statewide Forest Resource Strategy (Montana DNRC 2010) recognizes the need to foster responsible management of private lands that integrates harvest of traditional and non-traditional forest products as a tool for good land stewardship. The amount of timber harvest on state and private lands and adjacent national forests will affect the local economy. Additional harvest from these lands would help to stabilize local jobs and income. Any decrease in harvest would add to a decrease in associated jobs and income.

There is the potential for the development of two large-scale copper and silver mines on the KNF in the foreseeable future. If these mines are developed, there would be a positive impact on local jobs and income.

## Other Required Disclosures

### *Environmental Justice*

As required by Executive Order 12898, all federal actions must consider potentially disproportionate effects on minority or low-income communities. The Forest Plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. The Plan does not create, authorize, or execute any ground-disturbing activity, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities. Site-specific activities will consider potential disproportionate effects on minority or low-income communities during project planning.

The social assessments for the KNF (Russell and Adams-Russell 2003, Russell and Downs 1995) and the assessment of social conditions and trends (Russell et al. 2006) did not identify any disproportionate impacts from forest management. In addition, collaboration on the Plan did not identify any concerns regarding disproportionate impacts to low-income or minority populations. The Forest also coordinated and consulted with federally-recognized tribes that had/have traditional uses within the Forest boundary. See the “American Indian Rights and Interests” section of chapter 3. No disproportionate impacts were identified by the Tribes.

### *American Indian Religious Freedom Act*

Agencies must make a good faith effort to understand how Indian religious practices may come into conflict with other forest uses and consider any adverse impacts on these practices in their decision-making practices. There are five federally-recognized American Indian nations with cultural affiliation on the KNF: the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the Kalispel Tribe, the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, the Spokane Tribe, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The aboriginal territory of the Kalispel, Coeur d’Alene, and Spokane Tribes, overlap with the territory now along the Clark Fork Valley with the territory used by the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The entire Forest is within aboriginal territory for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. No effects on American Indian social, economic, or subsistence rights are anticipated as a result of this Forest Plan revision effort. No matter which alternative is chosen for implementation, the Forest will be required to consult with tribes when management activities may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use, according to the Consultation Protocol. Desired conditions for American Indian Rights and Interests, for all action alternatives, would be for the KNF to; recognize and maintain culturally significant species and the habitat necessary to support healthy, sustainable, and harvestable plant and animal populations to ensure that rights reserved by Tribes in the Hellgate Treaty are not significantly impacted or diminished; recognize, ensure, and accommodate tribal member access to the Forest for the exercise of Treaty Rights and Cultural uses consistent with law, policy, and regulation; and recognize and protect traditional cultural areas as associated with the traditional beliefs of a Tribe about its cultural history.

### *Unavoidable Adverse Effects*

Forest Plan revision and Forest Plans do not produce unavoidable adverse effects because they do not directly implement any management activities that would result in such effects. However, the Forest Plans do establish management emphasis and direction for implementation of activities that may occur on NFS lands in the planning period. If those activities occur, the application of forestwide, management area, and geographic area standards and guidelines (as described in the revised Forest Plan) would limit the extent and duration of any resulting

environmental effects. Some unavoidable effects could still occur; however, these potential effects are described by resource area throughout chapter 3 of this EIS, primarily under “Environmental Consequences.”

### *Relationship of Short-term uses and Long-term Productivity*

Short-term uses are those expected to occur for the planning period (10 to 15 years), including recreation use, timber harvest, and prescribed burning. Although the Forest Plan does not directly implement these uses, the potential for these uses are described in the Forest Plan goals and objectives, both at the forestwide and MA levels (see revised Forest Plan).

Long-term productivity refers to the capability of the land to provide resource outputs for a period of time beyond the planning period. Minimum management requirements, established by regulation (31 CFR 219.27), provide for maintenance of long-term productivity of the land. Minimum management requirements are contained in forestwide and MA standards and guidelines and would be met under any alternative. They ensure that the long-term productivity of the land is not impaired by short-term uses.

Monitoring and evaluation, as described in the revised Forest Plan, applies to all alternatives. A primary purpose of monitoring is to ensure that long-term productivity of the land is maintained or improved. If monitoring and evaluation show that Forest Plan standards and guidelines are inadequate to protect long-term productivity of the land, then the Plan will be adjusted (through amendment or revision) to provide for more protection or fewer impacts.

Although all alternatives are designed to maintain long-term productivity, there are differences among the alternatives in the long-term availability or condition of resources. There may also be differences among alternatives in long-term expenditures necessary to maintain or achieve desired conditions. The differences are discussed throughout the various sections in chapter 3 of this EIS.

### *Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources*

Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources are defined in FSH 1909.15, Environmental Policy and Procedures.

Irreversible commitments of resources mean the consumption or destruction of nonrenewable resources, such as minerals or cultural resources, or the degradation of resources such as soil productivity, which can be renewed only over long periods of time.

Irretrievable commitments of resources are opportunities forgone; they represent tradeoffs in the use and management of forest resources. Irretrievable commitments of resources include expenditure of funds, loss of production, or restrictions on resource use. When one alternative produces less of a natural resource (such as timber volume) or offers fewer opportunities for use (such as non-motorized recreation) than another alternative, the difference represents an irretrievable commitment of resources.

The decisions made in Forest Plan revisions do not represent actual irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources. This is because forest planning identifies what kinds and levels of activities are appropriate in different parts of the forest; it does not make project decisions. The decision to irreversibly or irretrievably commit resources occurs at: (1) the time the Forest Service makes a project decision, such as approving new trail construction or a timber sale; (2) the time Congress acts on a recommendation to establish a new wilderness or to include a stream

segment in the wild and scenic river system; or (3) the time the regional forester designates a research natural area.

### *Energy Requirements and Conservation Potential*

Energy is consumed in the administration of natural resources from the national forests. The main activities that consume energy are timber harvest, restoration activities (mechanical vegetation treatments and prescribed and use of wildland fire for multiple objectives), recreation use, road construction and reconstruction, range use, and administrative activities of the Forest Service and other regulatory agencies. Energy consumption is expected to vary only slightly by alternative. Those alternatives with higher potential for restoration activity, timber harvest and/or road construction, reconstruction and obliteration (Alternatives B Modified, and D) are expected to have higher levels of energy use. Alternatives that have lower potential for these activities (C and A) are expected to have slightly lower levels of energy use.

Several opportunities exist under all alternatives to provide for energy conservation or conversion from less plentiful fuels to more plentiful fuels. For example, car-pooling and combining trips saves fuels and wear and tear on the Forest fleet. The use of electronic communication devices for sharing information, rather than scheduling meetings at one location, saves energy spent on travel. Improving energy efficiency of government buildings can conserve energy. More energy-efficient equipment for all activities like timber harvesting, road construction and reconstruction, or road maintenance can be required. More energy-efficient management methods can be explored and implemented as well.

### *Prime Farmland, Rangeland, and Forestland*

No prime farmland, rangeland, or forestland has been identified in the planning area. Forest Plan revision or the Forest Plan would not directly affect such lands; although implementation of the Plan could have indirect effects. Regardless of the alternative selected for implementation, NFS lands would be managed with sensitivity to the values of any adjacent private or public lands.

### *Threatened and Endangered Species*

Potential effects to species listed under the ESA can be found in chapter 3 of this EIS, as well as in the Wildlife Resource specialist report, the Aquatics/Soils/Riparian/Wetlands specialist report, and the Rare Plants specialist report (project file). The Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation will be finalized for the final Forest Plan and final EIS. Management direction to protect the threatened, endangered, candidate, and sensitive species, or to provide for their habitats, can be found in the revised Forest Plan (forestwide, management area, and geographical area desired conditions, standards, and guidelines).

### *Wetlands and Floodplains*

Forest Plan revision and Forest Plans do not directly implement any management activities that would result in loss of wetland or floodplains. Revised forestwide management direction identifies the need to restore currently degraded wetlands and floodplains, and provides a broad spectrum of standards and guidelines designed to protect soil, water, riparian, and aquatic resources. The goals and intent of Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management) and 11990 (Protection of Wetlands) would be met through compliance with this direction. Documentation for this conclusion can be found in this EIS, chapter 3, “Watersheds, Soils, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat/Species,” and in the revised Forest Plan (desired condition, standards, and guidelines).

### *Conflicts with Other Agency or Government Goals or Objectives*

Contact, review, and public involvement with other federal and state agencies indicate no major conflicts between the revised Forest Plan and the goals and objectives of other governmental entities.





## Chapter 4. List of Preparers

The preparation of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) and the revised Forest Plan has been a major undertaking. This list of preparers is limited to those people who were members of the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) working on these final documents. Preparation of these documents could not have been completed without the support and assistance of numerous employees on the KNF, past employees on the KNF who have retired or moved to other positions, and our colleagues in the regional office. We also recognize the forest leadership team as providing guidance during this process.

### Members of the Interdisciplinary Team:

Name	Unit	Position
Anderson, Jeremy	KNF	Wildlife Biologist
Cobb, Dave	IPNF	Vegetation and Fire Specialist
Dekome, Shanda	IPNF	Planning Staff
Frament, Ellen	KNF	Team Leader, Analyst and Economist
Laws, Mary	KNF	Recreation Specialist
Scaife, Dan	IPNF	Hydrologist/Fisheries Biologist
Sutton, Darcie	KNF	Writer Editor

### Support to the Interdisciplinary Team:

Name	Unit	Position
Carlson, John	KNF	Fish and Wildlife Program Manager
Gier, John	KNF	Soils Scientist
Kindel, Kenneth	KNF	Hydrologist
Kmonk, Nancy	KNF	GIS Support
Peel, Timory	Contract	Transportation
Rose, Dan	KNF	Fire/Fuels
Timmons, Rebecca	KNF	Archeologist
Shotzberger, Deena	KNF	Silviculturist
Williams, Emily	IPNF	Forest Planner (Coconino NF, detailed to IPNF)
Young, Will	IPNF	Hydrologist and Fisheries Biologist (detailed to IDT)



## Chapter 5. Agencies & Individuals Receiving EIS

### Distribution of the Environmental Impact Statement

This EIS has been distributed to individuals who specifically requested a copy of the document. In addition, copies have been sent to the following federal agencies, federally recognized tribes, state and local governments, and organizations.

Agency	Format		
	Hard Copy	CD	Web
Director, Planning and Review Advisory Council on Historic Preservation			X
Deputy Director USDA APHIS PPD/EAD			X
Rural Utilities Service (RUS)			X
Natural Resources Conservation Service National Environmental Coordinator			X
USDA, National Agricultural Library Head, Acquisitions & Serials Branch	X	X	X
United States Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division			X
Chief of Naval Operations Energy and Environmental Division			X
Environmental Protection Agency Region 8 (Montana Office) EIS Review Coordinator	X		
Director, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance United States Department of the Interior	X		X
Northwest Power Planning Council			X
United States Coast Guard (USCG) Commandant CG-47 Department of Homeland Security			X
Northwest Mountain Region Regional Administrator Federal Aviation Administration			X
Division Administrator Federal Highway Administration			X
United States Department of Energy Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance			X



## Chapter 6. Glossary

Term	Definition
<b>303(d) segments</b>	A stream or other waterbody that is listed by the state as being “water quality impaired” by a pollutant in their current 303(d) list or 303(d)/305(b) Integrated Report, pursuant to the Clean Water Act.
<b>Activity Area</b>	A land area affected by a management activity to which soil quality standards are applied. Activity areas include harvest units within timber sale areas, prescribed burn areas, recreation areas, and grazing areas or pastures within range allotments
<b>Allotment Management Plan (AMP)</b>	A document applying to management of rangeland ecosystems and livestock operations on the public lands prescribing: (1) the manner in and extent to which livestock operations will be conducted in order to meet ecosystem health, multiple use, economic, and other objectives; (2) describing range improvements to be installed and maintained; and (3) containing such other provisions relating to livestock grazing and other objectives found by the Secretary of Agriculture to be consistent with the provisions of Federal Land Policy and Management Act. An AMP integrates resource objectives, standards, guidelines, and management requirements for soil and water for watershed protection, wildlife and fisheries, recreation, timber, and other resources on lands within a range allotment.
<b>Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ)</b>	The quantity of timber that may be sold from the area of suitable land covered by the Forest Plan for a time period specified by the Plan. This quantity is usually expressed on an annual basis as the “average annual allowable sale quantity.”
<b>Alternative</b>	A combination of management prescriptions applied in specific amounts and locations to achieve a desired management emphasis as expressed in goals and objectives. One of several policies, plans, or projects proposed for decision making. An alternative need not substitute for another in all respects.
<b>Animal Unit Month (AUM)</b>	The amount of forage required by a one thousand pound cow, or the equivalent, for one month.
<b>Aquatic Ecosystem</b>	Waters of the United States that serve as habitat for interrelated and interacting communities and populations of plants and animals. The stream channel, lake or estuary bed, water, biotic communities and the habitat features that occur therein.

Term	Definition
<b>Bear Year</b>	The active bear year is from April 1 to November 15 Spring = April 1 to June 15; Summer = June 16 to September 15; Fall = September 16 to November 30; Winter = December 1 to March 30
<b>Bears Outside of Recovery Zone</b>	An area where one would reasonably expect to find grizzly bear use occurring during most years.
<b>Bear Management Unit</b>	Areas established for use in grizzly bear analysis. Bear management units generally: a) Approximate female home range size; and b) Include representations of all available habitat components.
<b>Beneficial Uses</b>	Any of the various uses which may be made of the water, including, but not limited to, domestic water supplies, fisheries and other aquatic life, industrial water supplies, agricultural water supplies, navigation, recreation in and on the water, wildlife habitat, and aesthetics.
<b>Best Management Practices (BMPs)</b>	Practice or set of practices that enable a planned activity to occur while still protecting the resource managed, normally implemented and applied during the activity rather than after the activity.
<b>Big Game</b>	Those species of large mammals normally managed as a sport hunting resource. Generally includes elk, moose, white-tailed deer, mule deer, mountain goat, bighorn sheep, black bear, and mountain lion.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variety and abundance of species, their genetic composition, their communities and the ecosystems and landscapes of which they are a part. As used in this document, biodiversity refers to native biological diversity; therefore, increase in species diversity resulting from the introduction of non-native species would not constitute an increase in biodiversity.
<b>Biophysical Setting</b>	An aggregation of vegetation response units, grouped by broad, climatic modifiers including temperature and moisture gradients.
<b>Candidate Species</b>	Plant and animal species being considered for listing as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Term	Definition
<b>Carbon Sequestration</b>	The process by which atmospheric carbon dioxide is taken up by trees, grasses, and other plants through photosynthesis and stored as carbon in biomass (trunks, branches, foliage, and roots) and soils. The sink of carbon sequestration in forests and wood products helps to offset sources of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, such as deforestation, forest fires, and fossil fuel emissions.
<b>Cavity</b>	The hollow excavated in a tree that is used by birds or mammals for roosting and/or reproduction.
<b>Coarse Woody Debris</b>	Coarse Woody Debris consists of dead woody material larger than 3 inches in diameter and derived from tree limbs, boles, and roots.
<b>Community (Ecological)</b>	A group of organisms living together; any group of interacting organisms.
<b>Community Wildfire Protection Plan</b>	A plan for an at-risk community that: Is developed within the context of the collaborative agreements and the guidance established by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council and agreed to by the applicable local government, local fire department, and state agency responsible for forest management, in consultation with interested parties and the federal land management agencies managing land in the vicinity of the at-risk community; Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment on federal and non-federal land that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure; and Recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability throughout the at-risk community.
<b>Composition (stand)</b>	The proportion of each tree species in a stand expressed as a percentage of the total number, basal area, or volume of all tree species in the stand.
<b>Connectivity</b>	The arrangements of habitats that allows organisms and ecological processes to move across the landscape; patches of similar habitats are either close together or linked. The opposite of fragmentation.
<b>Conservation Subwatersheds</b>	Subwatersheds (6th level HUC) are considered to have excellent habitat, excellent water quality, and strong populations of native fish species. These areas are intended to protect stronghold populations of native salmonids and complement restoration efforts. See also Priority Watersheds.

Term	Definition
<b>Corridors</b>	Avenues along which wide ranging animals can travel, plants can propagate, genetic interchange can occur, populations can move in response to environmental changes and natural disasters, and threatened species can be replenished from other areas.
<b>Critical Habitat</b>	Specific areas within the geographic area occupied by the species on which are found those physical and biological features, (1) essential to the conservation of the species; and (2) which may require special management considerations or protection.
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	The physical remains of human activity (artifacts, ruins, burial mounds, petro glyphs, etc.) and conceptual content or context (as a setting for legendary, historic, or prehistoric events, as a sacred area of native people, etc.) of an area of prehistoric or historic occupation.
<b>Decommission</b>	Demolition, dismantling, removal, obliteration and/or disposal of a deteriorated or otherwise unneeded asset or component, including necessary cleanup work. This action eliminates the deferred maintenance needs for the fixed asset.
<b>Deferred Maintenance</b>	Maintenance that was not performed when it should have been or when it was scheduled, and therefore, was put off or delayed for a future period. When allowed to accumulate without limits or consideration of useful life, deferred maintenance leads to deterioration of performance, increased costs to repair, and decrease in asset value. Code compliance (e.g., life safety, ADA, OSHA, environmental, etc.), Forest Plan Direction, Best Management Practices, Biological Evaluations other regulatory or Executive Order compliance requirements, or applicable standards not met on schedule are considered deferred maintenance.
<b>Designated Route</b>	A NFS road, a NSF trail, or an area on NFS lands that is designated for motor vehicle use pursuant to 36 CFR 212.51 on motor vehicle use maps.
<b>Disturbance</b>	<p>A discrete event that changes existing plant community composition or structure; and interrupts, changes, or resets the ongoing succession sequence.</p> <p>Or: Human presence, noise, or other activity that causes wildlife to move away from the area or alter behavior.</p>



Term	Definition
<b>Dominance Group</b>	<p>Dominance group is determined by the following:</p> <p><b>Single species</b> – species that makes up at least 60 percent of the canopy cover or weighted basal area.</p> <p><b>Species mix</b> – No single species determination can be made. Type of mix, either tolerant or intolerant, is determined by what species combination makes up 80 percent of the canopy cover or weighted basal area, with each species contributing more than 20 percent of the total. Mixed species were combined with vegetation response units to derive a single species label, based on predominant vegetation types within a vegetation response unit.</p>
<b>Down Wood</b>	Accumulation of woody material scattered on the forest floor that consists of two categories: coarse woody debris and fine woody debris.
<b>Ecological Conditions</b>	Components of the biological and physical environment that can affect diversity of plant and animal communities and the productive capacity of ecological systems. These components could include the abundance and distribution of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, roads and other structural developments, human uses, and invasive, exotic species.
<b>Ecosystem</b>	A spatially explicit unit of the earth that includes all the organisms, along with all components of the abiotic environment within its boundaries.
<b>Ecosystem Diversity</b>	The variety and relative extent of ecosystem types, including their composition, structure, and processes within all or a part of an area of analysis.
<b>Ecosystem Function</b>	Includes energy flows of materials across and within the landscape and how one ecosystem influences another. Function also relates to energy processes such as fire, hydrological processes (including floods), and matter and energy exchange throughout the food chain.
<b>Ecological Integrity</b>	The capacity to support and maintain a balanced, integrated, and adaptive biological system having the full range of elements and processes expected in a region's natural habitat.
<b>Endangered Species</b>	A plant or animal species listed under the Endangered Species Act that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.
<b>Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)</b>	A detailed written statement as required by Sec. 102(2) C of NEPA

Term	Definition
<b>Fire-Adapted Ecosystem</b>	An arrangement of populations that have made long-term genetic changes in response to the presence of fire in the environment.
<b>Fire Regime</b>	The fire pattern across the landscape, characterized by occurrence interval and relative intensity. Fire regimes result from a unique combination of climate and vegetation. Fire regimes exist on a continuum from short-interval, low-intensity (stand maintenance) fires to long-interval, high-intensity (stand replacement) fires.
<b>Fire Suppression</b>	The practice of controlling forest and rangeland fires in a safe, economical, and expedient fashion while meeting the natural resource objectives outlined in each forest's or grassland's land management plan.
<b>Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA)</b>	A data source for forestwide vegetation. FIA inventories provide a statistical-based sample of forest resources that can be used for planning and analyses at local, state, regional, and national levels.
<b>Fire Management Plan</b>	A plan that identifies and integrates all wildland fire management and related activities within the context of approved land/resource management plans. It defines a program to manage wildland fires (wildfire and prescribed fire). The plan is supplemented by operational plans, including but not limited to preparedness plans, preplanned dispatch plans, prescribed fire burn plans, and prevention plans. Fire management plans assure that wildland fire management goals and components are coordinated.
<b>Forest Health</b>	The perceived condition of a forest derived from concerns about such factors as its age, structure, composition, function, and vigor, presence of unusual levels of insects and disease, and resilience to disturbance.
<b>Forest Road or Trail</b>	A road or trail wholly or partially within or adjacent to and serving the NFS that the Forest Service determines is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of the NFS and the use and development of its resources.
<b>Fragmentation</b>	A condition in which a continuous area is reduced and divided into smaller sections. Habitat can be fragmented by natural events or development activities.
<b>Fuel Treatment</b>	Any manipulation or removal of fuels to lessen potential damage and resistance to control (includes mechanical and prescribed fire treatments).

Term	Definition
<b>Goods and Services</b>	The various outputs, including on-site uses, produced by forest and rangeland resources.
<b>Grazing</b>	The authorized use of standing vegetation on NFS lands for livestock production within permitted grazing allotments.
<b>Grazing Allotment</b>	Area designated for the use of a certain number and kind of livestock for a prescribed period of time.
<b>Grizzly Bear Core Habitat</b>	An area of secure habitat within a bear management unit that contains no motorized travel routes or high use non-motorized trails during the non-denning season and is more than 0.3 miles (500 meters) from a drivable road. Core areas do not include any gated roads but may contain roads that are impassible due to vegetation or constructed barriers. Core areas strive to contain the full range of seasonal habitats that are available in the bear management unit.
<b>Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone</b>	<p>The area in each grizzly bear ecosystem within which the population and habitat criteria for achievement of recovery will be measured.</p> <p>Cabinet/Yaak grizzly bear recovery zone: This zone is approximately 2,600 square miles (6,734 square kilometers). The recovery zone is located in northwestern Montana and northern Idaho and includes portions of the KNF, Lolo, and IPNF.</p> <p>Northern Continental Divide grizzly bear recovery zone: The Northern Continental Divide grizzly bear recovery zone is approximately 8,933 square miles (5,717,164 acres). The recovery zone is located in northwestern Montana and includes portions of six national forests, including the Kootenai, two Indian Reservations, Glacier National Park, state of Montana, and private lands. There are approximately 115,190 acres of the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem on the KNF.</p>
<b>Habitat Guilds</b>	A set of species that share a common habitat (such as riparian areas) that use the same resources (such as food), or that use resources in the same manner (such as mode of foraging).
<b>Habitat Type</b>	All land areas potentially capable of producing similar plant communities (associations) at climax.
<b>Head Month</b>	One month's use and occupancy of the range by one animal. For grazing fee purposes, it is a month's use and occupancy of range by one weaned or adult cow with or without calf, bull, steer, heifer, horse, burro, or mule, or five sheep or goats.

Term	Definition
<b>Hibernacula</b>	Habitat niches where certain animals (e.g., bats) over-winter, such as caves, mines, tree hollows, or loose bark.
<b>Hiding Cover</b>	Vegetation capable of hiding 90 percent of a bull elk or adult deer from the view of a human at a distance equal to or less than 200 feet during all seasons of the year that elk or deer use the area. Generally any vegetation used for security or to escape from danger.
<b>Historic Range of Variability (HRV)</b>	The variation in spatial, structural, compositional, and temporal characteristics of ecosystem elements as affected by minor climatic fluctuations and disturbances within the current climatic period. This range is measured during a reference period prior to intensive resource use and management. The range of historic variability is used as a baseline for comparison with current conditions to assess the degree of past change.
<b>Hydrologic Unit (HU)</b>	A hydrologic unit is a drainage area delineated to nest in a multi-level, hierarchical drainage system. Its boundaries are defined by hydrographic and topographic criteria that delineate an area of land upstream from a specific point on a river, stream, or similar surface waters. A hydrologic unit can accept surface water directly from upstream drainage areas, and indirectly from associated surface areas such as remnant, non-contributing, and diversions to form a drainage area with single or multiple outlet points. Hydrologic units are only synonymous with classic watersheds when their boundaries include all the source area contributing surface water to a single defined outlet point.
<b>Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC)</b>	<p>The numeric identifier of a specific hydrologic unit consisting of a 2-digit sequence for each specific level within the delineation hierarchy.</p> <p>4th code refers to the 4th pair of an 8-digit code of a sub basin HUs that is generally 450,000 acres in size.</p> <p>5th code refers to the 5th pair of a 10-digit code of a watershed HUs that generally ranges from 40,000 to 250,000 acres in size.</p> <p>6th code refers to the 6th pair of a 10-digit code of a subwatershed HUs that generally ranges from 10,000 to 40,000 acres in size.</p>
<b>Inceptisol</b>	A gray-brown soil consisting mainly of clay and silt loams that is not particularly fertile but can be productive when properly managed.

Term	Definition
<b>Incidental Take</b>	Take of listed fish or wildlife species that results from, but is not the purpose of, carrying out an otherwise lawful activity conducted by a federal agency or applicant.
<b>Integrity</b>	The capacity to support and maintain a balanced, integrated, and adaptive biological system having the full range of elements and processes expected in a region's natural habitat.
<b>Intermediate Treatment</b>	Any treatment or tending designed to enhance growth, quality, vigor, and composition of the stand after establishment or regeneration and prior to final harvest.
<b>Intermittent Stored Service</b>	An existing road where future use is expected, but not known, and is currently closed to vehicle traffic. The road is in a condition that there is little resource risk if maintenance is not performed.
<b>Invasive Species</b>	Invasive species are an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Alien species are any species, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that is not native to that ecosystem (with respect to a particular ecosystem).
<b>Invasive Weeds</b>	See Noxious Weeds
<b>Inventoried Roadless Area (IRAs)</b>	<p><u>For National Forest System lands in Montana</u>, inventoried roadless areas are those areas mapped under the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. These areas are identified in appendix C of the FEIS for the revised Forest Plan. The official set of maps is maintained at the national headquarters office of the Forest Service.</p> <p><u>For National Forest System lands in Idaho</u>, inventoried roadless areas are those areas designated as Idaho Roadless Areas pursuant to 36 CFR §294.21 and 36 CFR §294.29. These areas are identified in a set of maps maintained at the national headquarters office of the Forest Service.</p>
<b>Keystone Species</b>	A species whose impact on its community or ecosystem is large, and disproportionately large relative to its abundance.
<b>Landbird Assemblage</b>	A group of species having similar ecological resource requirements and foraging strategies, and therefore, having similar roles in the community.

Term	Definition
<b>Landscape</b>	An area composed of interacting, and interconnected patterns of habitats (ecosystems) that are repeated because of the geology, land form, soil, climate, biota and human influences throughout the areas. Landscape structure is formed by patches, connections, and the matrix. Landscape function is based on disturbance events, successional development of landscape structure, and flows of energy and nutrients through the structure of the landscape. A landscape is composed of watersheds and smaller ecosystems. It is the building block of biotic provinces and regions.
<b>Landscape Pattern</b>	Number, frequency, size and juxtaposition of landscape elements (stands and patches) that are important to the determination or interpretation of ecological processes.
<b>Large Woody Debris</b>	<p>Large pieces of relatively stable, woody material located within the bankfull channel and appearing to influence bankfull flows. They are categorized as singles, aggregates, or rootwads.</p> <p><b>Single</b> – A single piece that has a length equal to or greater than three meters or two-thirds of the wetted stream width and 10 cm in diameter one-third of the way from the base.</p> <p><b>Aggregate</b> – Two or more clumped pieces, each of which qualifies as a single piece.</p> <p><b>Rootwad</b> – Rootmass or boles attached to a log less than three meters in length.</p>
<b>Long-term Sustained Yield Capacity</b>	The highest uniform wood yield from lands being managed for timber production that may be sustained under specified management intensity consistent with multiple-use objectives.
<b>Lynx Analysis Units (LAU)</b>	An LAU is an area of at least the size used by an individual lynx, from about 25 to 50 square miles. A project analysis unit upon which direct, indirect, and cumulative effects analyses are performed.
<b>Mechanized</b>	Wheeled forms of transportation including non-motorized carts, wheelbarrows, bicycles, and any other non-motorized, wheeled vehicle.
<b>Minerals (Locatable)</b>	Those hard-rock minerals that are mined and processed for the recovery of metals. They also may include certain nonmetallic minerals and uncommon varieties of mineral materials, such as valuable and distinctive deposits of limestone or silica.
<b>Minerals (Leasable)</b>	Coal, oil, gas, phosphate, sodium, potassium, oil shale, sulfur, and geothermal resources.

Term	Definition
<b>Minerals- Materials (Salable)</b>	A collective term to describe common varieties of sand, gravel, stone, pumice, pumicite, cinders, clay, and other similar materials. Common varieties do not include deposits of those materials that may be locatable.
<b>Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST)</b>	<p>The concept of Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics is to use the minimum amount of forces necessary to effectively achieve fire management protection objectives. It implies a greater sensitivity to the impacts of suppression tactics and their long-term effects, when determining how to implement an appropriate suppression response. Fire managers and firefighters select tactics that have minimal impact to values at risk. These values are identified in approved Land or Resource Management Plans. Standards and guidelines are then tied to implementation practices which result from approved Fire Management Plans. Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics is not intended to represent a separate or distinct classification of firefighting tactics but rather a mindset of how to suppress a wildfire while minimizing the long-term effects of the suppression action on other resources. The principle of fighting fire aggressively but providing for safety first will not be compromised in the process and when selecting an appropriate suppression response, firefighter safety must remain the highest concern.</p> <p><b>Examples of Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics might include;</b> “Personnel should avoid using rehabilitated fire lines as travel corridors whenever possible because of potential soil compaction and possible detrimental impacts to rehab work,” or “avoid use of non-native materials for sediment traps in streams.”</p>
<b>Mitigation</b>	Measures implemented to minimize, reduce, rectify, avoid, eliminate, and/or compensate the potential impacts to resources identified in the effects analysis.
<b>Mixed Severity Fire</b>	A fire severity classification where between 25 and 75 percent average top-kill of vegetation occurs within a typical fire perimeter.
<b>National Forest System Road</b>	A Forest road other than a road that has been authorized by a legally documented right-of-way held by a state, county or other local public road authority.

Term	Definition
<b>National Register of Historic Places</b>	The National Register of Historic Places is the Nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of Interior.
<b>Native Species</b>	Animals or plants that have historically occupied a given aquatic or terrestrial area.
<b>Natural, Unplanned Fire</b>	A wildland fire ignited by a natural event such as lightning.
<b>Noxious Weeds (invasive weeds)</b>	Plants designated as noxious weeds by the Secretary of Agriculture or by the responsible state official. Noxious weeds generally possess one or more of the following characteristics: aggressive and difficult to manage, poisonous, toxic, parasitic, a carrier or host of serious insects or disease, and being native or new to or not common to the United States or parts thereof.
<b>Off-highway Vehicle</b>	Any motor vehicle designed for or capable of cross-country travel on or immediately over land, water, sand, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, or other natural terrain.
<b>Old Growth</b>	Old growth stands are defined as those that meet the definitions in Green et al. 1992 (errata corrected 12/11). Those definitions include the discussion in that document titled "USE OF OLD GROWTH TYPE DESCRIPTIONS" (see pages 11 and 12). If that document is revised or replaced by the Northern Region, the updated version will be used.
<b>Open Motorized Route Density</b>	Calculation made with the moving windows technique that includes open roads, other roads not meeting all restricted or obliterated criteria, and open motorized trails. The percent of the analysis area in relevant route density classes are calculated.
<b>Openings</b>	Meadows, clear-cuts, and other areas of vegetation that do not provide cover.
<b>Outstandingly Remarkable Value</b>	A river-related value that is a rare, unique, or exemplary feature that is significant at a comparative regional or national scale.



Term	Definition
<b>Over-Snow Vehicle</b>	A motor vehicle that is designed for use over snow and that runs on a track or tracks and/or a ski or skis, while in use over snow.
<b>Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO)</b>	A pattern of Pacific climate variability that shifts phases on at least inter-decadal time scale, usually about 20 to 30 years. The PDO is detected as warm or cool surface waters in the Pacific Ocean, north of 20 degrees N. During a “warm”, or “positive”, phase, the west Pacific becomes cool and part of the eastern ocean warms; during a “cool” or negative” phase, the opposite pattern occurs.
<b>Plan Area</b>	The National Forest System lands covered by a plan.
<b>Planned Ignition (Prescribed Fire)</b>	The intentional initiation of a wildland fire by hand-held, mechanical, or aerial device where the distance and timing between ignition lines or points and the sequence of igniting them is determined by environmental conditions (weather, fuel, topography), fire technique, and other factors which influence fire behavior and fire effects (see prescribed fire).
<b>Prescribed Fire</b>	A wildland fire originating from a planned ignition to meet specific objectives identified in a written, approved, prescribed fire plan for which NEPA requirements (where applicable) have been met prior to ignition (see planned ignition).
<b>Present Net Value</b>	The difference between the discounted values (benefits) of all outputs to which monetary values or established market prices are assigned and the total discounted costs of managing the planning area.
<b>Priority Watersheds</b>	Subwatersheds (6th level hydrologic units) as described in INFISH (USDA Forest Service 1995), are intended to provide a pattern of protection across the landscape, where habitat for inland native fish would receive special attention and treatment and would have the highest priority for restoration, monitoring and watershed analysis. Priority watersheds have been further refined by Conservation Subwatersheds and Restoration Subwatersheds for implementation of this Forest Plan.
<b>Proposed Species</b>	Any species that is proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or National Marine Fisheries Service to be listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Term	Definition
<b>Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS)</b>	A framework of land delineations that identifies a variety of recreation experience opportunities categorized into classes on a continuum. The Spectrum's continuum has been divided into six major classes for Forest Service use: Urban (U), Rural (R), Roaded Natural (RN), Semi-primitive Motorized (SPM), Semi-Primitive Non-motorized (SPNM), and Primitive (P).
<b>Recreation Sites</b>	Specific places in the Forest other than roads and trails that are used for recreational activities. These sites include a wide range of recreational activities and associated development. These sites include highly developed facilities like ski areas, resorts, and campgrounds. It also includes dispersed recreation sites that have few or no improvements but show the effects of repeated recreation use.
<b>Recruitment Potential Old Growth</b>	Forest stands that do not meet the definition of old growth in Green et al. 1992 (errata corrected 12/11) but are being managed with the goal of meeting that definition in the future.
<b>Regeneration Treatment</b>	A cutting procedure by which a new age class is created; the major methods are clearcutting, seed tree, shelterwood, selection, and coppice.
<b>Resilience</b>	The ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organization, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change.
<b>Resistance</b>	The ability of an organism, population, community, or ecosystem to withstand perturbations without significant loss of structure or function. From a management perspective, resistance includes both 1) the concept of taking advantage of and boosting the inherent (biological) degree to which species are able to resist change, and 2) manipulation of the physical environment to counteract and resist physical and biological change.
<b>Restoration</b>	Restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. It is an intentional activity that initiates or accelerates the recovery of an ecosystem with respect to its health, integrity, and sustainability.
<b>Restoration Subwatersheds</b>	Subwatersheds (6th level hydrologic units) are identified as having relatively degraded habitat conditions, water quality limitations, depressed populations of native fish species, or a combination of the above, and a relatively higher potential for improvement through active or passive restoration efforts. See also Priority Watersheds.

Term	Definition
<b>Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCAs)</b>	<p>Portions of watersheds where riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis and management activities are subject to specific guidelines. The followings riparian habitat conservation areas widths are based on the best available science and apply to all aquatic habitats, except where site-specific analysis supports modification:</p> <p><b>Category 1 – Fish-bearing streams:</b> Riparian habitat conservation areas consist of the stream and the area on either side of the stream extending from the edges of the active channel to the top of the inner gorge, or to the outer edges of the one hundred-year floodplain, or to the outer edges of the riparian vegetation, or to a distance equal to the height of two site-potential trees, or 300 feet slope distance (600 feet, including both sides of the stream channel), whichever is greatest.</p> <p><b>Category 2 – Permanently flowing non-fish bearing streams:</b> Riparian habitat conservation areas consist of the stream and the area on either side of the stream extending from the edges of the active channel to the top of the inner gorge, or to the outer edges of the one hundred-year floodplain, or to the outer edges of the riparian vegetation, or to a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 150 feet slope distance (300 feet, including both sides of the stream channel), whichever is greatest.</p> <p><b>Category 3 – Ponds, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands greater than one acre:</b> Riparian habitat conservation areas consist of the body of water or wetland and the area to the outer edges of the riparian vegetation, or to the extent of the seasonally saturated soil, to the extent of moderately and highly unstable areas, or to a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 150 feet slope distance from the edge of the maximum pool elevation of constructed ponds and reservoirs or from the edge of the wetland, pond or lake, whichever is greatest.</p> <p><b>Category 4 – Seasonally flowing or intermittent streams, wetlands less than one acre:</b> This category includes features with high variability in size and site-specific characteristics. At a minimum, the riparian habitat conservation areas must include the area from the edges of the stream channel or wetland, to a distance equal to the height of one site-potential tree, or 100 feet slope distance, whichever is greatest.</p>
<b>Road</b>	<p>A motor vehicle route over 50 inches wide, unless identified and managed as a trail.</p>

Term	Definition
<b>Road Construction</b>	FSM 7705 defines road construction or reconstruction together as the supervising, inspecting, actual building, and incurrence of all costs incidental to the construction or reconstruction of a road (36 CFR 212.1).
<b>Road Decommissioning</b>	Activities that result in the stabilization and restoration of unneeded roads to a more natural state.
<b>Road Maintenance</b>	<p>The objective of road maintenance is to provide for safe and efficient travel; access for administration, utilization and protection of NFS lands; and protection of the environment, adjacent resources, and public investment (FSM 7730.2). The term road maintenance is defined at FSM 7705 as the “ongoing upkeep of a road necessary to maintain or restore the road in accordance with its road management objectives (FSM 7714).”</p> <p>FSH 7709.59 62.1 describes the scope of road maintenance to “include any expenditure in the repair or upkeep of a road necessary to perpetuate the road and provide for its safe use. Work items may include surface rock replacement, seal coats and asphalt overlays, bridge replacement, slide removal, and other items that contribute to the preservation of the existing road. Road maintenance is not intended to substantially improve conditions above those originally constructed; however, there may be a need for adding to or modifying the original conditions without increasing the service provided. Typical examples of this include installing additional minor culverts and traffic control devices, implementing traffic management strategies, placing small quantities of spot surfacing, and revegetating cut and fill slopes.”</p>
<b>Road Reconstruction</b>	<p>FSM 7705 defines road construction or reconstruction together as the supervising, inspecting, actual building, and incurrence of all costs incidental to the construction or reconstruction of a road (36 CFR 212.1).</p> <p>In practical terms, road reconstruction is conducted when the required work items to maintain or restore a road to its RMOs exceed what is expected during routine road maintenance. Additionally, work performed to upgrade the road’s service level above that for which it was originally constructed, to accommodate commercial haul or meet the needs of additional traffic, to realign an existing road for water quality protection, or to repair a road after natural disaster would be considered reconstruction.</p>
<b>Roadless Area</b>	See Inventoried Roadless Area

Term	Definition
<b>Salvage Cutting (or Salvage Logging)</b>	The removal of dead trees or trees being damaged or dying due to injurious agents other than competition, to recover value that would otherwise be lost.
<b>Scenic Integrity Objective</b>	<p>The Scenic Integrity Objectives serve as the desired conditions for the scenic resources and represent the degree of intactness of positive landscape attributes. SIOs are categorized into 5 levels. The highest scenic integrity ratings are given to those landscapes where valued landscape attributes will appear complete with little or no visible deviations evident. Lower SIOs are given to those landscapes where modifications to the landscape will be more evident. Each of the SIOs is defined as follows:</p> <p><b>Very High</b> – Landscape is intact with changes resulting primarily through natural processes and disturbance regimes.</p> <p><b>High</b> – Management activities are unnoticed and the landscape character appears unaltered.</p> <p><b>Moderate</b> – Management activities are noticeable but are subordinate to the landscape character. The landscape appears slightly altered.</p> <p><b>Low</b> – Management activities are evident and sometimes dominate the landscape but are designed to blend with surroundings by repeating line, form, color, and texture of valued landscape character attributes. The landscape appears altered.</p> <p><b>Very Low</b> (not used in the revised Forest Plan or this EIS) – Human activities of vegetative and landform alterations may dominate the original, natural landscape character but should appear as natural occurrences when viewed at back-ground distances</p>
<b>Security Habitat</b>	An area with low levels of human disturbance. This general definition covers most uses of the term security habitat, except for elk, which has a specific definition.
<b>Security Habitat (elk)</b>	Generally timbered stands on NFS lands at least 250 acres in size greater than 0.5 mile away from open motorized routes during the hunting season. Security is calculated for individual planning subunits. Roads not open to the public for motorized uses during the hunting season are not included in this calculation. The effects of non-motorized use and/or administrative motorized use of closed or temporary roads during the hunting season are not included in this calculation and would instead be analyzed separately at the project level.
<b>Seral Stage</b>	Any stage of development of an ecosystem from a disturbed, un-vegetated state to a climax plant community.

Term	Definition
<b>Silvicultural Prescription</b>	A silvicultural prescription is a written document that describes in detail the management activities needed to implement a silvicultural treatment or treatment sequence. The prescription is based on an examination of the stand being proposed for management. The prescription documents the results of an analysis of present and anticipated future stand conditions and evaluates this in terms of management direction. It also describes the desired future vegetation conditions in measurable terms.
<b>Silvicultural Systems</b>	A planned series of treatments for tending, harvesting, and re-establishing a stand.
<b>Size Class</b>	Size class is based on basal area weighted diameter of the plot/stand. Weighted diameter is calculated then classification is made as follows according to weighted diameter: Seedling/sapling: 0.0 – 4.9” DBH (if basal area weighted diameter is 0.0, must have 100 or more trees per acre) Small: 5.0 – 9.9” Medium: 10.0 – 14.9” Large: 15.0 +
<b>Snag</b>	A standing dead tree usually greater than five feet in height and six inches in diameter at breast height (DBH).
<b>Soil Erosion</b>	The detachment and movement of soil or rock by water, wind, ice, or gravity.
<b>Soil Function</b>	Any service, role, or task that soil performs, especially: Sustaining biological activity, diversity, and productivity; Regulating and partitioning water and solute flow (hydrologic function); Filtering, buffering, degrading, and detoxifying potential pollutants; Storing and cycling nutrients; and Providing support for buildings and other structures (trees) and to protect archaeological treasures (cultural features).
<b>Soil Productivity</b>	The inherent capacity of a soil to support the growth of specified plants, plant communities, and soil biota. It is often expressed by some measure of biomass accumulation.

Term	Definition
<b>Soil Quality</b>	<p>The capacity of a specific kind of soil to function, within natural or managed ecosystem boundaries, to sustain plant and animal productivity, maintain or enhance water and air quality, and support human health and habitation and ecosystem health. In short, the capacity of the soil to function. There are two aspects of the definition: inherent soil quality and dynamic soil quality:</p> <p><b>Inherent soil quality:</b> That aspect of soil quality relating to a soils natural composition and properties as influenced by the factors and processes of soil formation, in the absence of human impacts.</p> <p><b>Dynamic soil quality:</b> That aspect of soil quality relating to soil properties which change as a result of soil use and management or over the human time scale.</p>
<b>Special Use Authorization</b>	A permit, term permit, lease, or easement that allows occupancy, use, rights, or privileges of NFS land.
<b>Stand</b>	A contiguous group of trees sufficiently uniform in age-class distribution, composition, and structure, and growing on a site of sufficiently uniform quality to be a distinguishable unit.
<b>Stand Replacement Fire</b>	A fire severity classification where at least 75 percent average top-kill of vegetation occurs within a typical fire perimeter.
<b>Stressors</b>	Any physical, chemical, or biological entity that can induce an adverse response. Stressors can arise from physical and biological alternations of natural disturbances, increased unmanaged demand for ecosystem services (such as recreation), alterations of the surrounding landscape, chemical alterations in regional air quality, or from legacy of past management actions.
<b>Stronghold Population</b>	Directly associated with strong populations. For native fish, strong populations have numbers that are stable or increasing, and all major life history forms that historically occurred within the watershed are present.
<b>Structure (stand)</b>	The horizontal and vertical distribution of components of a forest stand including the height, diameter, crown layers, and stems of trees, shrubs, herbaceous understory, snags, and down woody debris.
<b>Succession</b>	The sequential process of long-term plant community change and development that occurs following a disturbance.

Term	Definition
<b>Suitable Habitat</b>	Habitat that currently has both the fixed and variable stand attributes for a given species habitat requirements. Variable attributes change over time and may include seral stage, cover type, and overstory canopy cover.
<b>Suitability</b>	The appropriateness of a particular area of land for applying certain resource management practices to a particular area of land, as determined by an analysis of the existing resource condition and the social, economic, and environmental consequences and the alternative uses foregone. A unit of land may be suitable for a variety of individual or combined management practices.
<b>Suppression</b>	The work of extinguishing a fire or confining fire spread.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Meeting needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainability is composed of desirable social, economic, and ecological, economic conditions or trends interacting at varying spatial and temporal scales embodying the principles of multiple-use and sustained yield.
<b>Take</b>	Regarding species listed under the Endangered Species Act: To harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct.
<b>Temporary Road or Trail</b>	A road or trail necessary for emergency operations or authorized by contract, permit, lease, or other written authorization that is not a forest road or a forest trail and that is not included in a forest transportation atlas.
<b>Threatened Species</b>	Any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range and which the appropriate Secretary has designated as a threatened species.
<b>Timber Harvest</b>	The removal of trees for wood fiber utilization and other multiple-use purposes.
<b>Timber Production</b>	The purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use. In addition, managing land to provide commercial timber products on a regulated basis with planned, scheduled entries.



Term	Definition
<b>Total Motorized Route Density</b>	Calculations made with the moving windows technique that includes open roads, restricted roads, roads not meeting all reclaimed criteria, and open motorized trails. The percent of the analysis area in relevant route density classes is calculated.
<b>Traditional Cultural Areas</b>	Those areas of the forest used by American Indians for traditional activities and often referred to as “religious use areas” or “sacred areas.” They may include areas traditionally used for gathering of special forest products.
<b>Trail</b>	A route 50 inches or less in width or a route over 50 inches wide that is identified and managed as a trail.
<b>Transitory Range</b>	Rangelands not normally suitable for livestock grazing which have been made suitable for a period of time by a management action. In the Forest Service, this mostly pertains to areas that have been logged and provide forage for one or two decades until the trees return at high densities.
<b>Travel Corridors</b>	An area of vegetation that provides completely or partially suitable habitat for animals to travel from one location to another.
<b>Ungulate</b>	A hoofed mammal such as a deer or elk.
<b>Use of Wildland Fire</b>	Management of either wildfire or prescribed fire to meet resource objectives specified in Land/Resource Management Plans.
<b>Utility Corridor</b>	A parcel of land, without fixed limits or boundaries that is being used as the location for one or more transportation or utility rights-of-way.
<b>Vegetation Management</b>	Activities designed primarily to promote the health of forest vegetation in order to achieve desired results. When vegetation is actively managed, it means that it is manipulated or changed on purpose by humans to produce desired results. Where active management of vegetation is required, techniques are based on the latest scientific research and mimic natural processes as closely as possible. Vegetation management is the practice of manipulating the species mix, age, fuel load, and/or distribution of wildland plant communities within a prescribed or designated management area in order to achieve desired results. It includes prescribed burning, the use of unplanned fire ignitions, grazing, chemical applications, biomass harvesting, and any other economically feasible methods of enhancing, retarding, modifying, transplanting, or removing the aboveground parts of plants.

Term	Definition
<b>Vegetation Response Unit</b>	Units of land with vegetative communities that have broadly similar disturbance responses and succession pathways, and that produce similar landscape-scale vegetation patterns. Vegetation response units are typically groups of habitat types aggregated by landform and topographic characteristics that regulate disturbance regimes and succession response. Historically lands within a given vegetation response unit were subject to broadly similar disturbance regimes.
<b>Water Quality Limited Segment</b>	A stretch or area of surface water where technology-based controls are not sufficient to prevent violations of water-quality standards. In such cases, new permit limitations are based on ambient-water-quality considerations. See also, 303(d) segments.
<b>Watershed</b>	A geographic area of land, water, and biota within the confines of a drainage divide. The total area above a given point of a water body that contributes flow to that point.
<b>Watershed Condition Rating</b>	<p>The state of the watershed based on physical and biogeochemical characteristics and processes (such as, hydrologic, geomorphic, landscape, topographic, vegetative cover, and aquatic habitat), water flow characteristics and processes (such as volume and timing), and water quality characteristics and processes (such as chemical, physical, and biological) ) as they affect water quality and water resources.</p> <p><b>Low:</b> Watersheds exhibit geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity, relative to their natural potential condition. The drainage network is generally stable. Physical, chemical, and biologic conditions suggest that soil, aquatic, and riparian systems are predominately functional in terms of supporting beneficial uses.</p> <p><b>Moderate:</b> Watersheds exhibit moderate geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition. Portions of the watershed may exhibit an unstable drainage network. Physical, chemical, and biologic conditions suggest that soil, aquatic, and riparian systems may not support beneficial uses.</p> <p><b>High:</b> Watersheds may have limited geomorphic, hydrologic, and biotic integrity relative to their natural potential condition. A majority of the drainage network may be unstable. Physical, chemical, and biologic conditions suggest that soil, riparian, and it is assumed that beneficial uses are not generally supported.</p>

Term	Definition
<b>Wetlands</b>	Those areas that are inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do or would support a prevalence of vegetation or aquatic life that requires saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas such as sloughs, potholes, wet meadows, river overflows, mud flats, and natural ponds.
<b>Wildfire</b>	An unplanned, unwanted wildland fire including unauthorized human-caused fires, escaped wildland fire use events, escaped prescribed fire projects, and all other wildland fires where the objective is to put the fire out.
<b>Wildland Fire</b>	A general term describing any non-structure fire that occurs in the wildland. Two distinct types of wildland fire have been defined and include planned ignitions (prescribed fire) and natural, unplanned fire (wildfire). See also planned ignitions and natural, unplanned fire.
<b>Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)</b>	<p>The term “wildland urban interface” means either:</p> <p>(A) An area within or adjacent to an at-risk community that is identified in recommendations to the Secretary in a community wildfire protection plan and/or under the “Healthy Forest Restoration Act”; or</p> <p>(B) In the case of any area for which a community wildfire protection plan is not in effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) An area extending ½-mile from the boundary of an at-risk community;</li> <li>(ii) An area within 1½ miles of the boundary of an at-risk community, including any land that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(I) Has a sustained steep slope that creates the potential for wildfire behavior endangering the at-risk community;</li> <li>(II) Has a geographic feature that aids in creating an effective fire break, such as a road or ridge top; or</li> <li>(III) Is in condition class 3, as documented by the Secretary in the project-specific environmental analysis; and</li> </ul> </li> <li>(iii) An area that is adjacent to an evacuation route for an at-risk community that the Secretary determines, in cooperation with the at-risk community, requires hazardous fuel reduction to provide safer evacuation from the at-risk community.</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
<b>Winter Range</b>	The area available to and used by wildlife (big game) during the winter season (Dec 1 to April 30). Generally, lands below 4,000 feet in elevation, on south and west aspects, that provides forage and cover.

## Chapter 7. Literature Cited

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